Children & LIBRARIES

the journal of the Association for Library Service to Children

Spring 2021
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Spring into Library Gardens!

The Power and Pleasure of Poetry

Move, Play . . . Learn!

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Editor's Note
Redefining Normal

By Sharon Verbeten

If there's one phrase that sticks out for me about the pandemic, it's "the new normal." What exactly is that? Is it trying to come to terms with the way our lives have changed over the last year—for better or worse? Or, as it more likely should be, *redefining what normal should be.*

We've all found ourselves pivoting—*there's another pandemic-inspired word!*—over the past months. Sometimes it has worked—as in the many successful ways children's librarians have met their patrons' needs, with everything from virtual storytimes, outside storywalks, take-home bags, and more. Sometimes it hasn't—how many of us have had Zoom malfunctions, online interruptions, upset patrons, overflowing bookdrops, and mandatory quarantine periods.

We've also contended with the absence of in-person meetings and conventions—for me, as well as for many of you, attending the ALA conferences virtually. And while I know things will change going forward, there's just no substitute for seeing all of our colleagues in person, sharing stories over coffee, fan-girling over our favorite authors, and nabbing swag on the exhibit floor.

While we may not see each other in person for quite some time, I'm proud of how our ALSC committees have continued to do their hard and important work—especially those working toward fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) throughout our division and our profession—via phone, email, text, chats, blogs, and other virtual venues.

Read more about some of those initiatives, including the EDI task force and its Equity Fellows, along with some excellent articles on the LGBTQ presence in books and libraries and other diversity measures, in this issue.

Maybe our new normal is to constantly get used to "new normals." I'm just hoping that our next new normal feels a bit more comfortable. &

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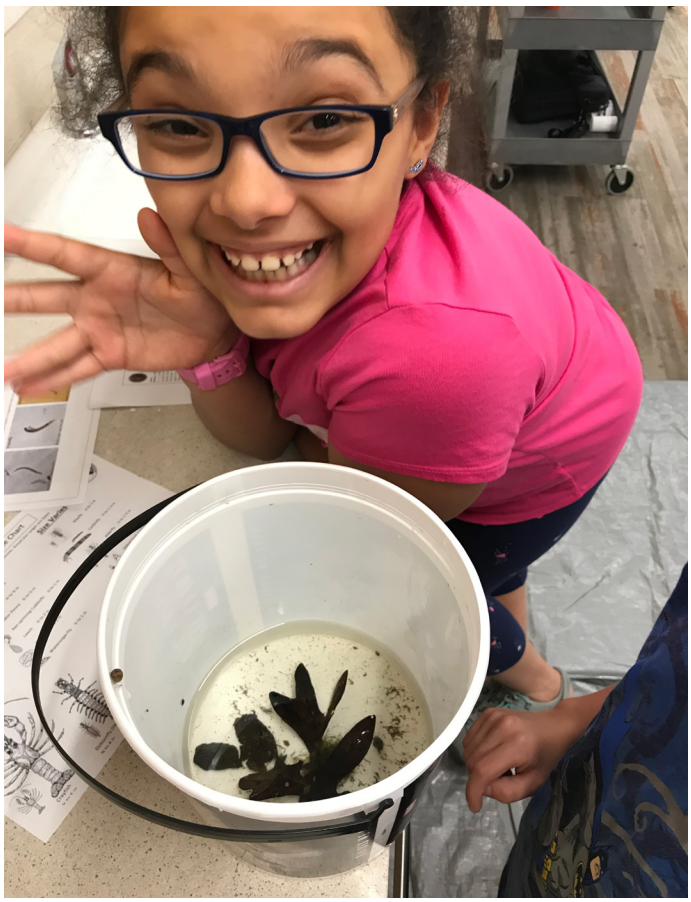
Move, Play, Read!



A child smiles when she sees a snail in a water sample.
Photo courtesy Kelly Senser, Loudoun County Public Library.

When the pandemic shut down many libraries in spring 2020, children's librarians had to be creative to fill the void when most in-person programming stopped. In this collection of articles, librarians used everything from outside activities (like storywalks) to motion and movement programs to engage children. See how they helped students move, play, and read!—*Editor*

Libraries for the Whole Child

NOAH LENSTRA

Dr. Noah Lenstra *started Let's Move in Libraries in 2016 at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro's School of Education, where he is an Assistant Professor of library and information science. His book* Healthy Living at the Library *was published in 2020 by Libraries Unlimited.*

Across the decades, physical activity in children's library programming has been a mainstay. *The Evolution of Early Literacy: A History of Best Practices in Storytimes*, published in a previous issue of this journal, points out that, in 1950s Newark, New Jersey, one of the stated outcomes of the library's story hour was "learning dances."[1]

The first edition of *Library Programs: How to Select, Plan and Produce Them*, published by New York public librarians John S. Robotham and Lydia LaFleur in 1976, features an entire section on dance programs. The authors note

> sometimes a program demonstrating dances will end with the audience being urged to participate. And dances are held in libraries just to have a dance. That most frequently happens with young adult programs, and it seems to be worldwide. A library in Sweden held a dance as part of a Sunday evening youth program. A German library had 'dancing among the bookshelves.' . . . The Plainfield (N.J.) Public Library held a square dance for children and their parents.[2]

Beyond dancing, public librarians have over the years sought to foster interest in sports and active recreation. Susan Orlean notes in *The Library Book* that in the 1890s, Los Angeles city librarian Tessa Kelso "hoped the library could expand and begin loaning more than books; she pictured a storeroom of tennis racquets, footballs ... 'the whole paraphernalia of healthy, wholesome amusement that is out of the reach of the average boy and girl.'"[3]

What *is* new is increasing sophistication about how and why to encourage this physical activity in libraries. In an earlier age, we might take a dance break to get out our wiggles; today we have entire books published by the American Library Association focused on how to *Get Your Community Moving* [through] *Physical Literacy Programs for All Ages*, (written by library leader Jenn Carson, featured below*); Connecting*

Preschoolers with Books through Art, Games, Movement, Music, Playacting, and Props; *Creating Playful Storytimes with Yoga and Movement*; and *Move, Play, Learn: Interactive Storytimes with Music, Movement, and More*.[4] What perhaps was a storytime extra in the past is now increasingly the main event.

With the explosive growth of StoryWalk programs, a worldwide phenomenon started by retired public health educator Anne Ferguson in collaboration with Vermont's Kellogg-Hubbard Library and the Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition in 2007,[5] librarians have increasingly focused their programming energies outside of the library building. Increasing interest in active play spurred by Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR) has further spread these flames.

As part of outdoor summer Anji Play programs at the Madison (WI) Public Library, librarians note, "Another really common play pattern, especially in Anji Play, is leaping, flying off of tall things."[6] As we continue to take our programs outside during the COVID-19 pandemic, we also strive to incorporate the natural world into programming.

This article sets out to raise awareness of the myriad ways in which children's librarians support the whole child through programs and collections. Let's hear from public librarians across North America to stretch our minds about how libraries support healthy child and family development.

"When the whole family moves together . . . families absorb the idea that libraries are spaces for holistic child and family development."

One thing we hear throughout *all* of these vignettes is the importance of partnerships. Libraries serve the whole child by working with the whole community. The more you and your staff are out in the community the better able you are to do these types of programs.

Another related theme focuses on utilizing all available spaces. The first three vignettes focus on programs that take place outdoors. We then hear about a library that merges indoor and outdoor spaces, before we consider what can be done indoors, both inside the library and through outreach programming. The key thing is, "Leave no stone unturned!"

Given the increasing ubiquity of music and movement programming in public libraries, we thought it would be good to look at two different approaches, one from a small town in the Midwest and another from an urban library system on the East Coast that serves half a million residents.

We also hear discussion of this programming as family programming. Given the rapid rise and interest in family programming in public libraries, it is worth thinking about and discussing the importance of fostering movement and physical literacy not only among children, but also among their caregivers. When the whole family moves together in library programs, whether they be StoryWalk or yoga storytime or kite-flying programs, families absorb the idea that libraries are spaces for holistic child and family development.

Create the scenery of your family trip to the zoo through yoga! Photo courtesy Christy Dyson, Fulton County Library System.

Finally, we've heard many examples of librarians pivoting and adjusting to the COVID-19 pandemic, struggling and succeeding in engaging and supporting the whole child/family during these difficult times.

In 2016, I started the Let's Move in Libraries! initiative to fan the flames of this type of programming. The members of our advisory board featured in this article demonstrate some of the myriad ways children's librarians engage their communities to increase access to lifelong learning opportunities. We invite you to share with us your story at https://letsmovelibraries.org/share-your-story.

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A Gorham family incorporates suggested movements while enjoying the StoryWalk; note this was photographed prior to the outdoor mask mandate in the area.
Photo courtesy Heidi Whelan, Baxter Memorial Library.

Family fun on *The Maine Birthday Book* StoryWalk in Gorham, Maine.
Photo courtesy Heidi Whelan, Baxter Memorial Library.

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A COVID-19 StoryWalk

HEIDI WHELAN

Heidi Whelan *is Youth Services Librarian at Baxter Memorial Library in Gorham, Maine. She has a bachelor's degree in LIS from the University of Maine at Augusta and is currently enrolled in the MLIS program at Kent State.*

"If you build it, they will come" was the thinking behind Baxter Memorial Library's (Gorham, Maine) newest project, *The Maine Birthday Book* StoryWalk.

I had wanted to build a StoryWalk for a few years, but the timing was never quite right. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I thought, "If not now, then when?" With businesses, libraries, and schools being closed or operating under strict constraints, now seemed the perfect time to offer a StoryWalk as a way for families to explore early literacy and movement in nature.

StoryWalks are amazing free community resources that foster children's interest in reading, while also encouraging healthy outdoor activities. By spending time together, families strengthen their caregiver-child bond by creating memorable experiences through reading and movement activities.

My goal was to build a permanent StoryWalk with durable signage in a beautiful location. I started by choosing a book, ideally one of interest to families with kids ages toddler to age 10. I chose *The Maine Birthday Book*.

Collaboration was key in completing our StoryWalk. Everyone I approached was enthusiastic and happy to participate. Author Tonya Shevenell gave us digital files of her book to use in our sign design. Cindy Hazelton, director of Gorham Parks and Recreation, oversaw the StoryWalk installation. Shaw Brothers Construction agreed to let us use their nature path and built the sign plates and posts. Library Assistant Jeffrey Knox taught himself InDesign so he could translate my paper designs into digital designs for the sign production. I also

received a grant from the Maine Bicentennial Committee to fund all this work.

At our ribbon-cutting event in September 2020, I saw all the families I've missed since we've switched to digital programming. It was so wonderful to see the families enjoying the StoryWalk. I can't believe I waited so long to build one. It wasn't easy, but it definitely was worth it!

Go Fly a Kite!

JENN CARSON

Jenn Carson *is a professional yoga teacher and the director of the L.P. Fisher Public Library in Woodstock, New Brunswick, Canada. She is the award-winning author of* Get Your Community Moving: Physical Literacy Programs for All Ages *and* Yoga and Meditation at the Library: A Practical Guide for Librarians. *She was a 2019* Library Journal *Mover & Shaker for her physical literacy advocacy.*

More than a decade ago, I discovered that communicating and relating with people, especially young children and those with sensory processing issues, was often more productive when done through movement rather than through words.

I began exploring something I later learned was called *physical literacy*, the ability of the body to "read" the environment and interpret symbols and physical or emotional inputs through the sensory system, as opposed to through the symbols and perceived meaning derived from words—either spoken or written. The library became both my training ground and research laboratory for testing out which movement-based, hands-on programs were most effective at reaching audiences that might otherwise be less engaged with more traditional library offerings.

Today I am a well-known author and researcher of all things to do with movement and wellness in a library. I'd like to introduce you to a recent program I implemented at the L.P. Fisher Public Library in Woodstock, New Brunswick, Canada, where I am the director.

I'm always on the lookout for new materials to add to our collections to help support physical literacy, from yoga mats to snowshoes to board games and puzzles that challenge fine-motor skills. So, when my friend Leland Wong-Daugherty, creator of Little Cloud Kites, approached me about the possibility of having some kite programming at the library, a fabulous community partnership was born.

Leland generously donated six organic-cotton, wood-framed kites, complete with quivers (a shoulder bag for carrying the kite) and spools with hemp string. Together we designed a laminated instruction card to include with each kit, and I had it translated into French (we live in a bilingual province). The kite kits were cataloged, and we decided on a three-week

Jenn, left, carries the kites in their quivers while a patron and Leland, right, prepare for an afternoon of flying.
Photo courtesy Jenn Carson, L.P. Fisher Public Library.

lending period. Leland built an eye-catching cabinet in which to store them, and he offers free maintenance and repairs.

On June 15, 2019, in the glorious sunshine, we launched a free kite-lending library (https://www.facebook.com/events/1290785724413726/). Excited families gathered around the new cabinet while Leland and I expounded on the joys and benefits of kites. The local Dairy Queen donated an ice cream cake, and after a short celebration, we headed outside to a field next to the local river to fly together for a few blissful hours. Community members of all ages and cultural backgrounds, many of whom had never piloted a kite before, joined together in this mindful, mesmerizing practice.

We've continued lending kites during the pandemic (once we re-opened)—we quarantine them for seventy-two hours before putting them back in the cabinet. If creating a kite-lending library isn't an option, you could try hosting a kite-building workshop instead (https://halifax.bibliocommons.com/events/5c37ac1b7a7bd22a000d2db1). For more information, visit The American Kitefliers Association at www.kite.org; free paper patterns are available to download at www.littlecloudkites.com.

Weaving Nature into Children's Librarianship

KELLY SENSER

Kelly Senser *is a Children's Services Library Assistant for Loudoun County Public Library in northern Virginia. She worked at the National Wildlife Federation for twenty years and has been a certified Virginia Master Naturalist since 2015.*

Three years ago, on the eve of my first anniversary at Loudoun County (VA) Public Library, I received grant funding for a

nature program series I developed. The money allowed for the purchase of binoculars, field guides, and other exploration tools, but the countless moments of childhood discovery that followed would be its lasting reward.

As I hosted monthly events spotlighting local plants and wildlife, I didn't have to rely heavily on teaching or explaining to pave the way for learning about the natural world. Stirring emotions and inviting kids to tune in with their senses prompted investigation, as biologist Rachel Carson suggested.

"Once the emotions have been aroused—a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration, or love—then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response," Carson writes in *The Sense of Wonder*. "Once found, it has lasting meaning."[1]

I've witnessed many moments of awe through the years. . . . A child turns from tentative to transfixed as he listens to frog and toad calls, proving himself adept at describing the vocalizations.

I've witnessed many moments of awe through the years. Giggles give way to curiosity about replica animal droppings at a "Whose Scat Is That?" station. A smile grows wide when a snail appears in a creek water sample. A child turns from tentative to transfixed as he listens to frog and toad calls, proving himself adept at describing the vocalizations.

Carson had a prescription for keeping alive this inborn sense of wonder and its accompanying resilience. A child needs "the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him [*sic*] the joy, excitement, and mystery of the world we live in."[2]

My library colleagues and I count ourselves among these grown-up guides, bolstered by the contributions of peers in our community. Nonprofit leaders and representatives of our county's soil and water conservation district, cooperative extension office, and parks and recreation department have been enthusiastic allies in our efforts to bring nature-based programming to young people. They have shared their knowledge and passion, loaned us education kits, and invited us to their green spaces to bring concepts such as bird-watching, planting for pollinators, and StoryWalk trails to life.

These collaborations are a win-win-win. Partners generate awareness of their efforts on behalf of the environment; families gain access to expertise in the form of enriching content and new community links; and the library fortifies its role as a network weaver, nurturing people's connections to the natural world.

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Storytime and Movement

MICHELLE BENNETT-COPELAND

Michelle Bennett-Copeland *is the Library Director at the Fayette County Public Library in Georgia. She had previously worked in the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System for eighteen years. As a Branch Manager there, she received a Community Champion Award, from Adamsville-Collier Heights Business District, for excellent community engagement.*

Let's Move in Libraries was a perfect platform for me to combine two things I absolutely love—books and dance. As a former dance instructor, I was excited to see that a vision was created and received by society to show how everything works together.

Dance/exercise/movement is all part of a person's physical and mental health/wellness. To have coordination and balance, you must be active, which will influence/improve one's mental and cognitive development. Cognitive development is needed to be able to think clearly, make decisions, and live a long life.

The objective of the Let's Move in Libraries program we developed at the Fulton County (GA) Public Library is to enhance participants' cognitive development, balance, and coordination.

During the program, participants engaged with a forty-five-minute interactive storytime about dance and exercise. Librarians lead children in a discussion of various types of dance/exercise/yoga, and other physical activities. Participants learned a short dance and fitness routine set to fun music, to better understand the art of dance. Two suggested titles for this program are *Giraffes Can't Dance* by Giles Andreae and *Pete the Cat and the Cool Cat Boogie* by Karen and James Dean.

Outcome measures of this event show that participants not only increased their knowledge of the art of dance, but they also increased their fitness/exercise, self-confidence, assertiveness, and coordination/balance.

In addition, physical health and wellness are now looked upon as something fun to do while simultaneously improving one's health.

United Way of Greater Atlanta Learning Spaces

CHRISTY DYSON

Christy Dyson *is an Assistant Branch Manager for Fulton County Library System. Originally from Denver, Colorado and a graduate of Clark Atlanta University School of Library and Information Science, she worked as a public services librarian and as the coordinator of teen service programs for the Fayette County (GA) Public Library.*

Learning Spaces is an early learning initiative designed for caregivers, childcare providers, and children from birth to age 5. Through collaboration with local libraries (Georgia's Fulton County Public Libraries) and early childhood professionals, it has been developed to be a preschool program in nontraditional spaces. Benefits for children and families include social interaction, age-appropriate play, and a safe and nurturing environment.

Before COVID-19, and during the major renovations of branches of the Fulton County Libraries, I partnered with learning spaces at several of our library locations that were opened, and offered a yoga storytime called Kidz Flex & Flow. This storytime was tailored to learning spaces' monthly curriculum.

The impact it had on the children and caregivers was awesome! Young children learned yoga by imitating animal poses, colors, seasons, emotions, and objects. Parents and caregivers also got the chance to join in and help their children express themselves through movement and play.

Libraries for the Whole Child in Maine

DANIELLE FORTIN

Danielle Fortin *is the Teen Services Librarian at the McArthur Public Library in Biddeford, Maine and the Chair of the Youth Services Section for the Maine Library Association.*

What is programming for the whole child? The whole-child approach incorporates all areas of learning and development into one process. It combines literacy, math, science, and other cognitive skill sets into a strategy that helps children make the adjustment from home learning to school.

This isn't just for preschoolers; the whole child approach can be adapted to every growth stage. Instead of focusing on one small aspect of a child's learning, it incorporates a number of skills and methods to benefit the whole child.

I first started using the whole child approach with StoryTimes at my library. I wanted to engage my kids in learning and make it fun. I started small, adding counting games and flannels to my programs, then as I got more confident, I branched out to add science and physical literacy elements like yoga and dancing. Not only were the kids absolutely engaged, but my attendance skyrocketed.

With that success, I began incorporating the whole child approach to all my events and programs, and now when I develop a program, I consider what parts of a child the event will bolster.

My goal is to support as much of that child's life as I possibly can. I bring healthy snacks because children cannot learn if they are hungry. I ask leading questions and encourage children to be experts. I make mistakes and talk about how I am still learning, as mistakes are opportunities. I challenge children to think in different ways and try new things.

This past year, I have attempted to bring this same approach to my virtual events. Prior to COVID, I had started a Dungeons & Dragons club at my library. D&D incorporates math and science into a fantasy adventure where participants get to explore their identity. Since we could no longer meet in person, I investigated the online options for continuing, and through two virtual platforms (Roll20 and Discord), I was able to bring our game to the kids. It gave the kids an outlet that they needed and, in addition to being fun, taught them critical thinking skills, team building, math, and even science. And again, I was rewarded. We successfully played throughout the summer.

I also figured out a way to incorporate cooking literacy into virtual events. One morning, I invited a friend of mine to make mug cakes via Facebook on our library's live stream—thus creating Mug Cake Monday. Now that our library is slowly opening back up, I will be expanding this program into take-home kits so kids can participate and make edible science experiments together.

Music, Movement, and More in Ohio

BARBARA SCOTT

Barbara Scott *has been Children's Librarian at Bucyrus Public Library in Ohio for 35 years. She is also Executive Director of Crawford Reads 20, a county-wide initiative. She also directs the Governor's Imagination Library for Crawford County.*

Our Music, Movement, and More program at the Bucyrus (OH) Public Library began as a collaborative effort with the local Help Me Grow organization in Crawford County. We provided space and a literacy component for this program from 2010 to 2013 until funding was lost through Help Me Grow, a

program of the Ohio Department of Health. The woman who ran this program is now my co-teacher.

As the children's librarian, I felt this program was too important to our younger patrons and their families to just let go. Prior to 2013, we offered two sessions per year. But after receiving a United Way grant in 2013, we added a summer session. Our program was a first for the local United Way; until that point, they had not funded an educational program.

Why this program? Music provides emotional release, cultural sharing, physical knowledge, listening skills, cognitive development, appreciation, motor development, self-esteem, strong bond between parent/child, social interaction, and most importantly, pre-literacy skills.

We have since offered three ten-week classes per year (Winter/Spring, Summer, Fall/Winter). In 2015, we added a late afternoon session in addition to our late morning session.

According to evaluations, we serve all income brackets, and we have also had physically/developmentally handicapped children attending our classes.

Families who attend at least seven weeks of the session receive an instrument to take home, courtesy of the United Way, in the hopes they continue the experience of the class at home.

In the past several years, we have expanded our program to include drumming and simple yoga. The balls and buckets for drumming were purchased with a mini grant. We use yoga songs as a cool-down before I end the class with a story and fingerplay, as I have done from the very beginning.

To date, nearly 13,000 people have participated in our programs. As we head into our seventh year with United Way funding, we are looking at doing these programs virtually.

COVID-19 cut short our Winter/Spring 2020 program, and we were unable to hold our Summer 2020 program. We had received a family literacy grant (through the United Way) in 2020 to purchase sound equipment to take the program to the streets at local community celebrations in the county, but due to COVID, the outside programming did not take place. In Fall 2020, we have also started taking the program into preschool classrooms.

Music and Movement in Maryland

CATHERINE JELLISON

Catherine Jellison *is an Early Literacy Specialist at the Crofton Branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library in Maryland.*

The Anne Arundel County Public Library serves a community of more than five hundred thousand inhabitants in the greater Baltimore/DC area in Maryland. Our children's programming is extremely popular.

A relatively recent addition are our Music and Movement sessions, which began in 2015. Previously we had offered evening family storytimes once a month, but since they had become sparsely attended, we were looking for alternatives. We wanted to offer some children's programs in the evenings and on weekends so working parents could participate.

Taking inspiration from other libraries, we created a half-hour long, high-energy program focusing on rhymes, songs, and instruments, and less on books, although we always include a story. We try to find a story that incorporates a lot of movements, or singing, or other interactive elements, and one that can be told with props or flannel pieces is even better. Instruments such as rhythm sticks, shaker eggs, and bells are very useful in this type of programming, as is the ever-popular parachute.

Because we offer this program in the evening, we see whole families attending, often both parents, sometimes even grandparents and older siblings too. Because of the nature of the program, all are able to participate and have a wonderful, shared experience that builds physical literacy in a fun way.

The content varies depending on the presenter. Rebecca Hollerbach, a former music educator and current early literacy specialist at our Discoveries branch, pioneered our Music and Movement programs while at our Deale branch in 2015. Her sessions focus on being "experiential and educational," typically including a cultural song from another country, melodic and rhythmic games and activities, and a "special instrument" that she introduces to the group, explaining what instrument family it is in, and letting everyone try it out (*gently!*).

She finds that including these music education concepts to her programs adds value to the experience for the kids and caregivers too. She noted, "The community impact is enormous. Music programs in schools are often the first thing to go when budget cuts come around, and many families do not have the means to pay for music lessons for their child.

"Being able to introduce preschoolers to music fills my heart in the biggest way. I love that this is something I can offer to our community free of cost at the library." &

Down the Rabbit hOle

Museum to Offer New Experiences of Children's Books Up Close and Personal

LINDSEY FOAT

Co-founders Deb Pettid and Pete Cowdin pose with one of the giant LED bunnies that will one day adorn the roof of The Rabbit hOle, and are currently glowing in the windows on the second floor of the building.

Running a children's bookstore for nearly thirty years, Deb Pettid and Pete Cowdin witnessed not only the vital impact of books and story, but also how educational trends were increasingly focused more on proficiency levels than cultivating a love of reading.

As both booksellers and artists, the pair began to envision a place where children and families could reconnect with story, celebrate the culture around children's literature, and literally step into some of the greatest children's books ever published.

So, five years ago they closed their beloved children's bookstore, The Reading Reptile, to embark on an outlandishly ambitious adventure—The Rabbit hOle.

Located in a 165,000 square-foot warehouse in North Kansas City, Missouri, The Rabbit hOle will be home to the world's first Explor-a-Storium, where radically immersive discoverable environments and interactive exhibits will allow visitors to explore children's books in brand new ways.

Surrounding the Explor-a-Storium will be a cafe with bookish eats, a full-service bookstore, a resource library, and several spaces for programming focused on story creation, art making, and book making. Oh, and Pettid promises there will be books everywhere.

The Rabbit hOle has completed two of three construction phases, including an exhibit fabrication facility where all the exhibits are currently being designed and built. So far, The Rabbit hOle has raised $10 million and plans to launch a public capital campaign to raise the final $3.5 million needed to complete the project and open in late 2021 or early 2022.

Q: What are some of your primary goals for The Rabbit hOle?

PC: The mission is to radically expand the reading lives of young people and their parents, to create an experience that will compel even the most apathetic and reluctant readers, and to do it in a way that is inclusive and accessible to all.

DP: On the most basic level, we want people of all ages to be able to inhabit and explore stories, to discover children's books, both classic and contemporary, in new and dramatic ways. In the process, we hope that young people will begin

Lindsey Foat *is The Rabbit hOle's Content and Communication Director. Raised in her mother's children's bookstore in Colorado, she has always loved and been surrounded by books for all ages. Prior to joining The Rabbit hOle team in 2020, she worked in communications for the Kansas City Public Library and spent ten years as a public television producer.*

One of the first immersive exhibits The Rabbit hOle team built was a mobile experience based on *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson. Before COVID-19, The Rabbit hOle was planning to tour the bus to schools and libraries.

Near the grand staircase of the Explor-a-Storium, elements from various exhibits including *Harry the Dirty Dog, Perez and Martina, I Want My Hat Back,* and *Katy No-Pocket* are temporarily stored.

to discover the power of their own stories and the stories of others.

Q: In addition to the Explor-a-Storium, what are some of the other areas of The Rabbit hOle?

PC: The experience only becomes transformational when it's supported by meaningful programming. We have three main program drivers—a letterpress print shop and story lab, a full-service bookstore and makerspace, and a resource library and reading room. These will serve to help young people go further to find their own stories, help families connect through story, and assist educators and librarians in their efforts to teach through story.

DP: The one-hundred-years history panorama will provide a full 3-D representation of more than 800 books and creators of the twentieth century. It will show both the evolution and "habitats" of one hundred years of children's books.

Q: What makes The Rabbit hOle unique?

PC: The Rabbit hOle is a living, breathing exhibit machine. We're creating all our exhibits on-site in a 20,000 square-foot fabrication facility on the back of the museum. When we reach full exhibit production levels in 2021, we will have twenty-five to thirty artists, designers, and fabricators on staff. We will implement iterative design approaches that respond to the visitor experience while continuously creating new exhibits that will inspire people to return to the museum—and the books we're bringing to life—over and over again.

Q: How do you envision The Rabbit hOle as a resource for ALSC members, librarians, and educators?

PC: If the only thing The Rabbit hOle did for ALSC members was to inspire them to imagine literature and story in new ways, that would be enough. But the deeper benefits will be ongoing and discoverable. We are working directly with creators and estates in brand new ways to realize their work, to uncover readings of their books that will add to contemporary pedagogy, and further advance the use of literature in the classroom.

DP: The Rabbit hOle will also be a place that will support research and growth. Our resource library will contain entire bodies of work of many of the authors and illustrators featured in Explor-a-Storium, as well as books and resources about the past, present, and future of children's literature. And for educators, and librarians in particular, we'll offer a unique opportunity to watch a diverse audience connect to stories, and then take all those different ways of learning and sharing back to their classroom or library.

Q: What kind of programming opportunities will you offer?

DP: There are so many possibilities. From national design and writing contests to relationships with living creators through residencies and workshops, we're plotting myriad ways to engage different types of learners, entire families, and the wider children's book community. And at the core of this programming and everything we do at The Rabbit hOle is a focus on diversity and inclusion. Like many other areas of American society, children's book publishing has been a very white and homogenous endeavor—not only in its characters and settings, but also in terms of book creators. We want all visitors to see themselves represented and celebrated at The Rabbit hOle and in our programming.

Q: How has COVID-19 impacted The Rabbit hOle?

PC: From an operational perspective, COVID-19 is simply another fork in the road. It's extended our timeline to be sure, but in a good way really. We're glad that we hadn't opened before the pandemic settled in. That would have been disastrous. Now we have more time to make a better museum and

to learn from challenges of other institutions that have had to face the pandemic in real time.

From a human perspective, COVID has upended our sense of time and the future. It has created incalculable suffering. But this gives us even greater motivation to create an experience, when the time is right, that will deliver a much-needed respite from the confines of quarantine.

DP: It has also given us time to strengthen our design process, strengthen our team, and confirmed the strengths of our iterative process for creating exhibits.

Q: How can librarians and educators help and get involved?

DP: Right now, we just need love. The Rabbit hOle's impact in Kansas City will be immense but our reach is national. Once completed, The Rabbit hOle will be an epicenter in the children's book industry. As we head into the home stretch of our capital campaign, with exhibit production humming along, we need educators and librarians, and book lovers of all stripes, to join the pantheon of award-winning authors and illustrators who have already invested in our project to share The Rabbit hOle vision and spread the word across their networks, so we can bring this thing home in 2021.

PC: Librarians, above all others, are indefatigable defenders of democracy, the first amendment, and the right to read. It's nothing less than that. Reading is a civil right. Illiteracy is a public health issue. The Rabbit hOle strives to create an engagement with literature for young people that will transcend literacy barriers and deliver an experience that brings everyone together around story.

The Rabbit hOle's National Advisory Council includes children's literature visionaries including award-winning authors Kate DiCamillo, Brian Selznick, Daniel Handler, Shane Evans, Linda Campbell Ernst, and Linda Sue Park as well as children's literature authorities Leonard Marcus and Dr. Michelle Martin. For more information, visit www.rabbitholekc.org/. &

Whatever Wednesdays: Remember In-Person Programming?

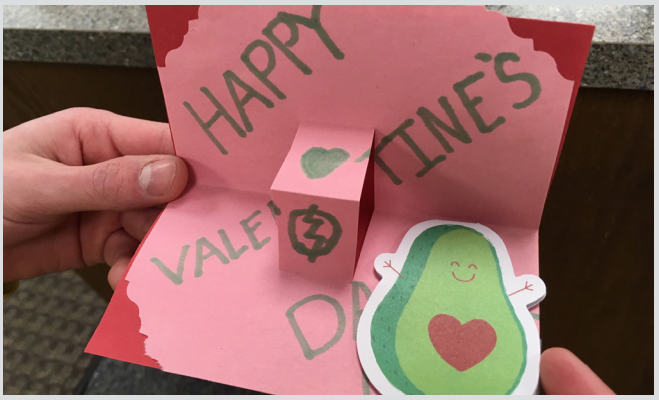
Sharon Verbeten

Remember afterschool kids flooding your library? *Hungry? Annoying? Wanting something—anything!—to do?*

If you, like I, miss them—yes, I'm willing to admit that!—it's fun to reminisce about the days when we could all get together. One of my favorite programs was Whatever Wednesdays, where I'd plan a program for the twenty-five to forty kids who would gather in our library waiting for rides.

Those programs included more structured, such as an instructor leading a wire art program, to more free-form—like creating decoupage art, making slime, hosting a Polaroid photo studio with a room full of props, or even having a low-key Green Bay Packers pep rally on our patio.

It didn't take much money to put these together, and though we sometimes had to coax kids off their devices to participate, once they did, they usually had a good time and something to show off! Let's hope we're back to in-person programming again soon! &



Pop-Up Valentines were a popular program.

We relied on our outside patio as a venue for our sticky make-your-own-slime program.

The Blossoming of the Library Garden

How One Library Is Engaging Families Outdoors

MARIA TRIVISONNO AND BEATE VAN DER SCHALIE

Harvesting the ripe vegetables that they helped to plant is a favorite activity for local children at the Warrensville Heights Branch of CCPL. Here Jaxon displays a sweet red pepper he has just picked.

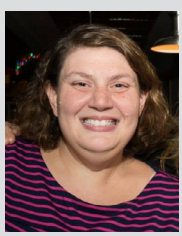
As twenty-first-century libraries create programming, they are finding innovative ways to engage children and families in lifelong learning through hands-on experiences.

Outdoor nature spaces and gardens at public libraries are ideal environments for both formal and informal learning. In underserved, urban communities where greenspace is limited, providing a learning garden as a resource is especially valuable.

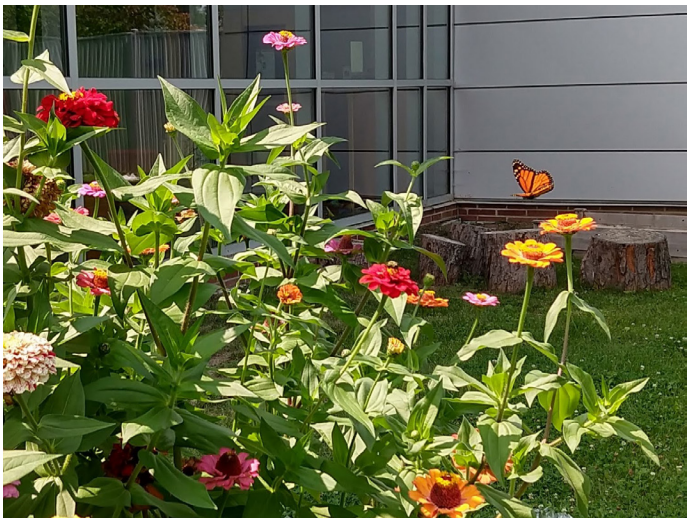
Using Cuyahoga County Public Library's (CCPL's) Warrensville Heights (WVH) branch library as a case study, this article explores how a library in a low-income inner-ring suburb installed a children's garden that led to numerous positive impacts. In October 2015, Sari Feldman, then executive director of Cuyahoga County Public Library in suburban Cleveland, Ohio, approached the staff of the WVH branch with the idea of developing a children's garden at the branch. In Warrensville Heights, a community with a population of roughly thirteen thousand, many families live in apartments and lack access to green space. The area is aptly described as a "food desert," where residents have little access to fresh produce.

To set the initiative into motion, Feldman reached out to partner with the Cleveland Botanical Garden (CBG), whose director of school garden partnerships subsequently helped WVH develop a garden. In early 2016, they held a visioning session that was attended by residents and key community members including leadership from the city schools, the neighboring YMCA, two local hospitals, and the city of Warrensville itself. Attendees noted a desire for a peaceful green space, a place to physically play, and an opportunity to learn about food sourcing.

The CBG took these suggestions as the basis of a first-year plan for the garden, which was installed by both WVH and CBG staff. It was placed on the north side of the library



Maria Trivisonno *is Children's Branch Services Supervisor, Mayfield Branch, Cuyahoga County (OH) Public Library and* ***Beate van der Schalie*** *is Children's Branch Services Assistant, Warrensville Heights Branch, Cuyahoga County Public Library.*



A Monarch butterfly sipping nectar from zinnias is a new and welcome sight for apartment-dwelling customers visiting the library garden at CCPL's Warrensville Heights Branch.

building in a grassy alcove, allowing for high visibility from the children's area, safety from the parking lot, and access to an exit door and a water spigot. Although the garden space is quite large—just over four thousand square feet—the initial plantings and recreation assets were modest. During the garden's first summer, in 2016, WVH and the CBG installed child-friendly features, which included three 3-by-3-foot raised beds for planting vegetables, along with hopscotch bricks and a sandbox. A large pre-existing bed of dying bushes was also replaced with perennial flowers and herbs. The total financial investment by CCPL's administration for the initial development and planting was $4,000.

Support from library administration continued the following summer. In 2017, the library installed a gate because deer had discovered the garden in early spring. However, the gate is always kept unlocked and accessible to the public, even when the library is closed. Though staff continue to monitor activity in the garden, so far there have been few issues other than occasional littering in the space, a testament to the community's buy-in and respect for the garden.

Also, in the spring of 2017, the garden received generous financial support from two other sources. First, WVH was a recipient of the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL)'s Let's Learn Together Outside (LLTO) grant. Branch staff were trained by NCFL on family engagement techniques and the specific LLTO curriculum. The program prompted caregivers to engage their preschool-aged children with both nature and early literacy skills. After a meal, caregivers and children took part in separate activities. Children attended an interactive storytime, while caregivers were shown how nature can prompt open-ended conversation with children that leads to the further development of vocabulary and narrative skills. The groups then reunited outdoors in the garden where caregivers could practice the tips they just learned. The program was successfully held in summer of 2017. The second source of funding came from a local donor, whose yearly financial support raised the Warrensville children's services budget from $400 annually to close to $2,000. Funds were used for physical improvement of the garden (soil, plants, tools) and garden-based programming. Additional raised beds were added to allow for a greater variety of vegetable crops. The monies also funded the LLTO program in subsequent years as well as outside guests for summer programming.

Marketing and Promotion

While programs are promoted through the library's website and seasonal program guide, in-person recruiting seems to work best in the Warrensville community. Families tend to access the internet via smartphone and do not necessarily visit the library website.

Many neighborhood children visit the library without adult caregivers and do not check paper program guides or pre-register for programs. This may explain the success of the weekly Garden Crafts program, which is not advertised, but rather relies upon the attendance of the branch's local children who utilize the library as a summer hang-out. Since it's not promoted, the program can have a flexible start time, aimed at times when most children are at the library and looking for something constructive to do.

Informal Learning and Family Engagement

Since its installation, the garden has generated enthusiasm and curiosity in youth. Popular nature and garden-based programs have included scavenger hunts, painting, photography, cooking, planting, and an annual Harvest Fest. Children's programs such as the Garden Crafts program are staff facilitated but encourage independent exploration.

Children who participate in this weekly program frequently enter the garden on their own to harvest vegetables, build sandcastles in the sandbox, make chalk drawings on the sidewalk, or turn cartwheels on the lawn.

Additionally, staff observed positive results when they introduced the garden to families who attended storytime and those who participated in the branch's Baby and Kindergarten Clubs. As the staff member leading Baby Club observed, "We relied on the garden to help very needy parents have joyful experiences with their children. They struggled in a traditional indoor setting, and the garden allowed the space, platform, and positive energy that they needed. We were able to do scavenger hunts, large bubbles, sand play, watering plants, and digging. These activities broke the ice and created joyful opportunities for parent engagement with their children."

Jacob is one of several teens who help keep CCPL's Warrensville Heights Branch garden watered and weeded. He and his friends report that they have started adding peppers, broccoli, and chives from the library garden to their ramen noodles.

Taliyah is a frequent visitor in the youth department at CCPL's Warrensville Heights Branch, and is always eager to get involved in activities being offered. In the garden, she quickly fills a bowl with fresh broccoli and a green pepper.

Measurable Impacts

The positive impact of the WVH library garden can be seen through both anecdotal and measurable data.

Thanks to philanthropic funding since 2017, the WVH children's department has been able to greatly increase its STEAM programs. Monthly program statistics show an 82 percent increase in the number of nature and garden-based STEAM programs offered in the thirty months after the installation of the garden compared to thirty months before its installation, resulting in a 43 percent increase in STEAM program offerings overall.

Customer attendance in nature and garden-based STEAM programming has followed suit, increasing 70 percent in the thirty months after the installation of the garden compared to thirty months before its installation. This translates to a 35 percent increase in overall STEAM program attendance during that time period.

Maintenance

While many libraries with on-site gardens have installation and maintenance provided by outside community partners, at WVH, staff perform these duties. However, gardening experience varies among staff. Therefore, to assist with cross-training:

- A garden-experienced staff member created a user guide, including a map, plant information, maintenance tips, and program ideas.

- Garden programming was expanded to include the teen and adult departments. As a result, reference staff from these departments participated in seminars at the CBG and toured other community gardens throughout the city to gain gardening experience. The interdepartmental Garden with a Librarian program was created to allow staff to facilitate one evening per week of community interfacing with the garden. This multigenerational program will aim to include garden tours, games, free play for children, weeding and small maintenance tasks, harvesting, and food prep.

Looking Toward the Future

Library staff continue to grow in collective experience and seek ways to support and promote the garden as a valuable community asset. In summer 2020 when the pandemic halted in-person programming, staff constructed a StoryWalk that allowed families to participate in a literacy-based activity in a safe, socially distant way. As the vegetable crops ripened, customers were given bags to pick their own produce.

Staff are also working on post-pandemic plans to recruit a team of regularly scheduled volunteers to weed during the growing season as well as researching rain-catch irrigation systems.

We hope this history of the WVH garden will provide ideas and inspiration for other libraries who are considering adding on-site gardens as a way to promote customer engagement and life-long learning in their communities.

This document does not necessarily represent the views of Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL) nor is it endorsed by CCPL. Photos courtesy of Cuyahoga County Public Library. &

A Picture Book Is Worth a Thousand Words

Building a Character Literacy Library

MARY KATHERINE DUNCAN

According to the U. S. Department of Education, character education refers to teaching "the habits of thought and deed that help people live and work together as families, friends, neighbors, communities, and nations."[1]

Character education has long been viewed as an essential part of the mission of schools,[2] and some have even suggested that it may be the primary purpose of education in the future.[3] In addition, meta-analytic studies have linked character education to decreased risk behaviors, increased prosocial behaviors, favorable school outcomes, and healthy social-emotional functioning.[4]

Research has also shown that the most effective character education programs include, among other things, professional development, dynamic student interactions, an explicit focus on character, modeling, and community service.[5] In other words, effective character education programs challenge students to appraise their own and others' character strengths, craft their lives around identified signature strengths, and use their positive traits in service of others.

To prepare young children to benefit from best practices in elementary and middle school character education curricula, early childhood educators and other school-based professionals are often tasked with introducing young students to the concept of what it means to be a person of good character. Just as early literacy skills such as print motivation, print awareness, vocabulary, and narration lay the foundation for formal academic instruction and achievement, early character literacy skills such as an interest in, awareness of, vocabulary for, and ability to describe character strengths may provide the basis for meaningful and fruitful character education. Unfortunately, pre-service educators and practicing teachers may feel underprepared to teach character literacy.[6] To this end, school librarians may play a valuable role in character literacy programming.

Using picture books for psychoeducational or psychotherapeutic purposes (i.e., bibliotherapy) is not new.[7] Historically, clinical bibliotherapy has been used to help treat physical ailments, repair emotional damage, and restore behavioral health. Similarly, developmental bibliotherapy has been used to support typical development and prevent problems in the context of common psychosocial morbidities. Published research on the effectiveness of bibliotherapy shows that it is widely viewed as a beneficial adjunct therapy across a broad range of outcomes.[8]

Additionally, proponents of bibliotherapy assert that picture books are a safe, familiar, and effective medium for addressing daily hassles and major life events because they afford children the opportunity to identify with story characters, feel validated and understood, vicariously experience the

***Dr. Mary Katherine Duncan**, PhD, is Professor of Psychology, Joan and Fred Miller Distinguished Professor of Good Work, and Founder/Director, BU Toy Library at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania in Central Pennsylvania.*

character's thoughts and feelings, and ultimately gain insight for problem solving and decision making.[9]

Although comparatively less has been written about the use of children's picture books for the explicit purpose of advancing children's mental health and growing their socio-emotional competencies,[10] a recent study of 245 preschool teachers found that 94 percent of the early childhood educators believed that early childhood education is an appropriate venue for teaching character education, and 94 percent of the respondents believed that character education could be supported by picture books.[11]

Nevertheless, this same study also found that 72 percent of the respondents reported feeling only partially competent to deliver character literacy programming, in part due to difficulty finding or accessing quality picture books to target the many and varied facets of good character.

In a review of thirty-three articles drawn from educational and library information sciences databases, Christine A. Garrett Davis found that bibliotherapy is regarded as a useful tool consistent with school libraries' mission to support students' academic, social, and emotional development and that school librarians are well-positioned to serve as bibliotherapy resource persons.[12] Amy Catalano also noted that education librarians who are familiar with advances in psychological theory, research, and classification can play an important role in creating collections of bibliotherapeutic resources and recommending titles to guide school professionals' selection of relevant books.[13]

Around the turn of the twenty-first century, the discipline of psychology introduced a new perspective, called positive psychology, to balance its traditional focus on repairing damage.[14] Over the last two and a half decades, positive psychology has evolved into the scientific study of what makes life worth living, including positive experiences, positive traits, and enabling institutions.[15] Christopher Peterson, a prominent positive psychologist, asserted that one of the most critical tools for advancing the science and practice of positive psychology is the development of a common vocabulary for talking about the good life.[16] To this end, Peterson and Martin Seligman published *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (CSV) to summarize what is known about the universal human virtues of wisdom, courage, justice, humanity, temperance, and transcendence as well as the twenty-four character strengths that comprise these virtues.[17]

To be included in the CSV, each character strength had to meet several criteria, such as being widely recognized and admired across cultures, existing in civilizations across time, contributing to individual happiness, elevating others, and being the deliberate target of societal practices and institutions. Using this classification as a framework, school librarians are well-trained and well-positioned to build special collections of picture books that illustrate each of these character strengths for school libraries as well as curriculum materials centers.

The collection of picture books described below is the newest addition to the author's university-based toy lending library.[18] The toy library is a literacy and play resource center whose mission is to support faculty's, staff's, and students' coursework, research, and pre-professional fieldwork experiences. The character literacy collection was developed to help student teachers, social science practicum students, and allied health clinical students become familiar with widely available trade books for introducing young children to the names, descriptions, and examples of the character strengths described in the CSV. The following titles were identified by reading an extensive collection of children's literature, consulting book reviews on Amazon.com, as well as performing online searches of the Association for Library Service to Children's Notable Books lists, which include Caldecott and Newbery winners, and other award-winning picture book lists, such as the National Education Association's Teachers' Top 100 Books for Children, The Children's Book Council's Children's Choice Book Awards, Young Readers' Choice Awards, Parents' Choice Awards, Cybils Awards, as well as starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal*, and *Kirkus*. The goal was to identify one or two examples of high quality, easy-reader books with relatable characters, good illustrations, and an engaging storyline.

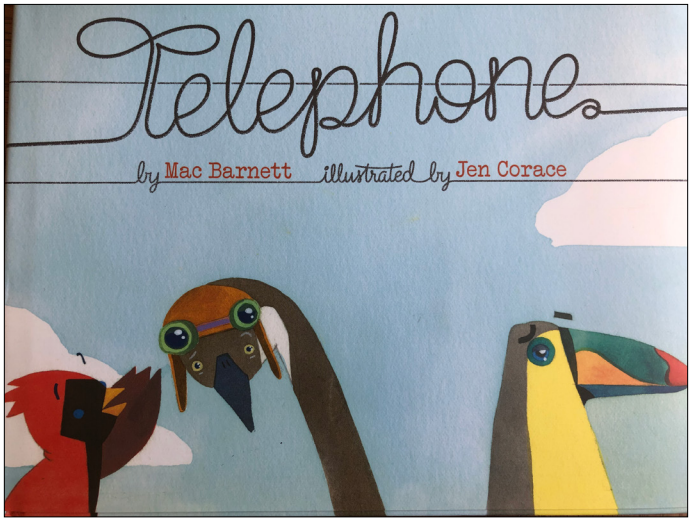
According to the CSV, the virtue of wisdom refers to acquiring and using information for the good of the Good. This virtue is considered the foundation of all others and it includes the character strengths of creativity, curiosity, love of learning, open-mindedness, and perspective. Individuals who demonstrate creativity are often characterized as inspired or imaginative as they evidence this character strength in innovative and adaptive thoughts or actions. Books such as *Willow* by Denise Brennan-Nelson and Rosemarie Brennan and Antoinette Portis' *Not a Box* portray characters thinking in original and productive ways; whereas, Hervé Tullet's *The Book with a Hole* prompts readers to exercise their creativity with the turn of every page.

Individuals who demonstrate curiosity are interested in new experiences and intrigued by the world around them. Jacqueline Woodson's *The Other Side* portrays characters who question the world as it is, whereas Tullet's *Press Here* prompts readers to explore and discover as they turn each page of the interactive book. Individuals who demonstrate open-mindedness are critical thinkers who weigh all of the evidence to achieve a clearer sense of the world. Time and again, the characters in Kevin Graves' *Chicken Big* change their minds in light of new information and observations; whereas, Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld's *Duck! Rabbit!* and Brendan Wenzel's *They All Saw a Cat* challenge readers to see things in a new way.

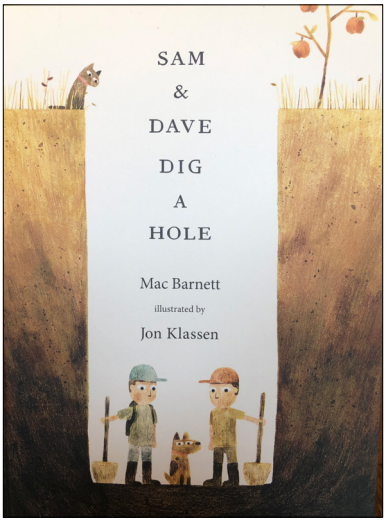
Those who demonstrate perspective show the ability to use knowledge and experience to provide sound advice to others. In Mac Barnett's *Telephone*, for example, a wise owl cuts through the "noise" of a game of telephone to clearly relay a message from a mother to her son. Finally, individuals

who demonstrate a love of learning show a strong desire for acquiring skills or knowledge. In *Abe Lincoln: The Boy who Loved Books* by Kay Winters and Nancy Carpenter, the main character and future President of the United States demonstrates an insatiable appetite for knowledge.

The CSV describes the virtue of courage as the will to accomplish goals despite internal obstacles such as fear, boredom, frustration or external opposition such as peer pressure or task difficulty. This virtue includes the character strengths of bravery, persistence, integrity, and vitality. Bravery, or valor, involves voluntarily confronting an actual or perceived threat. It manifests as physical, psychological, or moral bravery and may be demonstrated in ordinary or extraordinary ways. *Courage* by Bernard Waber captures the many faces of bravery and illustrates how bravery elevates others both in its modeling and in its giving away. Persistence, also known as perseverance, refers to finishing what you start. Books such as *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spiers as well as *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole* by Mac Barnett portray main characters who do not give up or lose heart.



Integrity, also known as authenticity, is demonstrated by individuals who speak the truth and take the high road even if it comes at personal sacrifice. *The Empty Pot* by Demi illustrates this character strength through a child who behaves with honor when everything is on the line and no one is watching. Integrity is also demonstrated by individuals who present themselves in a genuine, sincere way as in David Shannon's *A Bad Case of Stripes*. Vitality, or zest, is demonstrated by individuals who are passionate and energetic. Both *Exclamation Point* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld and *The Dot* by Peter Reynolds depict main characters who discover their *joie de vivre* and share their enthusiasm with others.



The CSV notes that the virtue of humanity includes positive traits that orient us toward one another and are evident in caring one-on-one relationships. This virtue includes the character strengths of love, kindness, and social intelligence. Love is demonstrated through reciprocated relationships such as those found in friendships, families, mentoring, and teammates. Both the Caldecott Award-winning *A Sick Day for Amos McGee* by Philip Stead as well as Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, for example, remind readers that the true power of love is love returned.

Kindness is the tendency to be nice to others. It is characterized by a sense of common humanity, manifest in compassion for others, and demonstrated by good deeds. Books such as *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox and *Sophie's Masterpiece* by Eileen Spinelli illustrate acts of altruistic grace. Social Intelligence is the ability to understand, appreciate, and respond to one's own and others' thoughts and feelings. Patrick McDonnell's *The Gift of Nothing* and Mo Willems' *Edwina: The Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct* highlight characters who understand, appreciate, and respond to others' unspoken needs and deepest desires.

According to the CSV, temperance protects individuals from excess emotional extremes and includes strengths such as forgiveness/mercy, humility/modesty, prudence, and self-regulation. Forgiveness/mercy involves giving people a second chance and not being vengeful. Derek Munson's *Enemy Pie* tells the story of a young boy who learns to let go of a grudge in order to reclaim a friendship. Modesty/humility involves not seeking the spotlight or elevating oneself above others. In books such as *The Tower* by Richard Paul Evans and *The OK Book* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Thomas Lichtenheld, the main characters learn modesty and demonstrate humility, respectively.

Prudence refers to refraining from saying or doing things that might lead to regret. P.D. Eastman's *Sam and the Firefly*, for example, introduces readers to a prudent owl who teaches his reckless friend how to have fun while exercising concern for the consequences of his actions. Self-regulation refers to controlling what one feels and does in order to live up to personal, social, or cultural standards. In *Perfect Square* by Michael Hall, for example, a square is cut into pieces, poked through with holes, torn into scraps, shredded into strips, crumpled, ripped, and wrinkled. Day by day, it reinvents itself into something even more exceptional.

According to the CSV, the virtue of justice includes character strengths relevant to the optimal interactions between an individual and a group such as fairness, citizenship, and

leadership. Citizenship, or teamwork, includes a sense of solidarity and doing one's share. Individuals who demonstrate citizenship look beyond their own self-interests, demonstrate loyalty, and take on additional duties and responsibilities for the benefit of the group. In John Vernon Lord's *The Giant Jam Sandwich*, villagers rise to the occasion of doing what they do best in order to rid the town of a swarm of wasps. Fairness refers to the equal or equitable treatment of others without allowing personal feelings to bias decisions. In *The Day the Crayons Quit* by Drew Daywalt, a child named Duncan appeases his crayons' "calls" for fairness by creating an A+ piece of art.

Leadership involves motivating members of a group to work together to achieve success. In the classic *Swimmy* by Leo Lionni, a single small fish leads a group of other small fish to explore the ocean. Like a good leader, Swimmy knows the way, shows the way, and goes the way.

According to the CSV, the virtue of transcendence includes the strengths that help individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives. These character strengths include appreciation of beauty, hope, gratitude, humor, and spirituality. Appreciation of beauty refers to a sense of awe or wonder that connects individuals to excellence in the form of physical beauty, skill or talent, and moral goodness. In *Grandpa Green* by Lane Smith, a child navigates his great grandfather's garden, which is adorned with horticultural tributes that memorialize a life well-lived. This book encourages readers to savor their own experiences and the wonders of the world around them.

Hope refers to expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it. In *Silent Music* by James Rumford, a young child in war-torn Baghdad expects that good things will come and his goal can be achieved as he strives to write the word for *peace* in calligraphy. Gratitude refers to the thankfulness that individuals experience upon realizing that they are the beneficiary of a tangible or intangible, intentional or accidental gift. Books such as Matt de la Pena's *Last Stop on Market Street* touchingly illustrate the fulfilling nature of recognizing and appreciating one's positive life circumstances and experiences.

Humor refers to laughing, amusing others, and seeing the bright side of an otherwise difficult situation. In Mo Willems' *Are You Ready to Play Outside?* and *We Are in a Book*, humor brings levity to a disappointing situation and connects the characters to the reader, respectively. Spirituality refers to beliefs about a higher purpose and the meaning of life. *Here We Are* by Oliver Jeffers, for example, offers an inspiring message about each human being's place in the world, connectedness to others, and potential to contribute to something beyond ourselves.

If the goal of character education is to cultivate good citizens who model living well with others, then character literacy is the means by which school libraries, early childhood educators, and other school-based professionals introduce children to what it means to be a good citizen. To this end, carefully selected picture books may be valuable tools for familiarizing children with the positive traits by which societies around the world and across time have identified people of good character. Through shared reading and story-related activities, children may seek, find, and appreciate character strengths that comprise human diversity and kinship and contribute to a good life.

Future initiatives will be geared toward familiarizing school librarians, early childhood educators, and other school-based professionals with the CSV as well as consulting with them to brainstorm multiple intelligences-inspired story-related activities to support the emergence of early character literacy skills (i.e., interest in, awareness of, vocabulary for, and descriptions of character strengths). Future research will survey school librarians, early childhood educators, and other professionals who provide library services to children in order to create a more extensive bibliography of award-winning picture books, including wordless picture books and nonfiction picture books (e.g., biographies and autobiographies) that highlight the CSV's twenty-four character strengths. Finally, future community outreach projects will involve creating character literacy tote bags to distribute picture books that feature the CSV's character strengths to support children's exploration of who they are and discovery of what they have to offer as good citizens in their homes, schools, and communities. &

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Any Which Way . . .

Loose Parts Play in the Library

GRETCHEN SWADLEY

These sisters love using all the random loose parts to create their own inventive play.

Many ready-made toys for children come with directions, instruction sheets, or strict rules for usage. While that may be fine in some cases, many believe children can benefit from good old play with a variety of random, unconnected items. After all, some of our earliest ancestors learned many skills from just rocks, sticks, and leaves.

Enter loose parts—a collection of natural or man-made materials that can be used to extend children's ideas and foster imaginative play. These parts can be moved, arranged, designed, taken apart, or anything else a child can think up.

The Theory of Loose Parts was created by British scholar and architect Simon Nicholson in 1971; he believed that loose parts are important to creativity and higher order thinking and that using loose parts at a young age helped with critical thinking and creativity later in life.[1] The theory of loose parts lends itself well to the Reggio Emilia philosophy and are often used together in daycares. Both ideas focus on open-ended play that supports imagination and creativity as well as allowing children to play with no limitations or expected outcomes. Thus, both beliefs are child-centered and focus on the creative process children use to figure out and understand the world around them.[2]

Loose parts—which can be made of natural or synthetic materials—encourage kids to play and explore with materials with no specific set of directions. They are ideal because they can be moved all over the space available, creating endless possibilities for creative play, both solo or collaboratively.

A piece of plastic food, for example, is just a piece of plastic food, but a slice of wood can be a piece of bread, furniture for dolls, a building, or anything else a child can imagine. This theory and practice allow children the freedom to explore materials and use them in any way they want and anywhere they want within the environment they are playing in.

With these types of materials or parts, children are better able to explore and improve multiple skills, including problem solving, engineering, creativity, concentration, hand-eye coordination, fine and gross motor development, language and vocabulary building, mathematical and scientific thinking, literacy, and social/emotional development.[3]

Tools of the Trade

Before compiling your collection, consider your physical space and the age of your potential audience. Our collection is designed for children ages 2 to 6 but is appropriate for babies and toddlers or older children with slight modifications.

Before adding any items, I made sure they would all pass a choke tube test. A choke tube test can be bought, or you can use an empty toilet paper or paper towel tube as a guide.

Gretchen Swadley *is a Youth Services Librarian with Brown County (WI) Library.*

More specifically, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, a test cylinder is 2.25 inches long by 1.25 inches wide.[4] In order to be safe for children under the age of three items should not fit through any of the tubes. If for instance you buy a small bag of gems and it can be passed through a toilet paper tube it is not considered safe for children under the age of three and is a choking hazard.

I considered seven types of loose parts for our collection.[5]

- Nature Based
- Wood Reuse (such as sticks, wood cookies, or wooden toys)
- Plastic
- Metal Objects
- Ceramic/Glass
- Fabric/Ribbon
- Packaging

Before purchasing items, look at what your library/system may already have from past programs. I put in a request to our Friends group for a total of $770; I spent $160 for books and $540 for parts and storage containers. I purchased all new items from online resources. Many of my purchases were made on Etsy, Amazon, Walmart, and Dollar Tree. If you can use recycled objects, thrift stores and garage sales are also an inexpensive resource.

To get ideas, I joined Facebook groups dedicated to loose parts, used Pinterest for ideas, and consulted *Loose Parts: Inspiring Play in Young Children* by Lisa Daly and Miriam Beloglovsky, as well as the blogs Fairy Dust Teaching and Fantastic Fun and Learning.

Some of my favorite loose parts items include wooden clothespins, Magna-Tiles, muffin tins, pipe cleaners, rattan balls, metal scoops, plastic shower rings, teacup tree, metal paper towel holder, wood slices, small tree branches, tongs, and small wood bowls. I also purchased three large totes to pack all the loose parts and books into for easy transporting and storage.

Our system has one large set that can travel between our branches. I encourage other librarians to get out just a few things if they want to focus the play or to get out everything and let the children select what they play with. The books that were bought for the kit stay with the kit. They are not able to be checked out, but they are put out for the program and I encourage parents and caregivers to read with the children if that fits into what the child is choosing to explore.

Don't Forget the Books!

Once I had all my loose parts kits assembled, I compiled a list of books that help promote such play. Here is a selected list.

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Barnett, Mac. *Extra Yarn*. Illus. by Jon Klassen. HarperCollins, 2012. 40p.

Portis, Antoinette. *Not a Stick*. Illus. by author. HarperCollins, 2007. 32p.

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Reynolds, Peter H. *The Dot*. Illus. by author. Candlewick, 2003. 32p.

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Developing a Program

Once a collection is established, it requires little upkeep or preparation; simply put out the parts in an appealing way and let the children play free. There are no rules or guidelines, but you can control what you decide to offer. For example, if you want to focus on *The Three Little Pigs*, consider having out sticks, glass gems or rocks, Popsicle sticks, small animals, or other objects pertinent to the story.

The low-cost program also lends itself easily to solo or collaborative play and gives caregivers ideas of ways to interact with their children at home.

Skills Developed

Playing with loose parts encourages symbolic play, storytelling, sequencing, and many other skills necessary for early

literacy. Both fine and gross motor development are needed to help strengthen the muscles used for writing as children grow and learn early writing skills. Smaller loose parts strengthen the tiny muscles in the hand, while larger objects encourage the development of larger muscles in the body.

Loose parts can also encourage awareness of letters; for example, different objects can be used to show the shapes and lines found in letters.

Symbolic play and storytelling also may come naturally to children playing with loose parts. Adults can ask open-ended questions about what they are doing or encourage them to act out a story they are already familiar with. The child who has read *The Three Little Pigs* can use various parts to act out the story or repeat their favorite parts, such as the wolf blowing the buildings down. Asking thought-provoking questions during play can expand a child's storytelling skills.[6]

Programming with Loose Parts

Once a kit is assembled, setting up a program is simple and quick. I like to set up at least two separate spots in the room with tables for children who like to work on higher surfaces or want to play with a caregiver. I try to keep the rest of the area clear of all furniture, with a few chairs for adults, and I display books on a nearby table.

I will also set out parts that work well together, like shower curtain rings and paper towel holders, near each other to encourage kids to try them out on their own.

Once the program starts, I take two approaches depending on my availability and goals for the programs. Sometimes I just check in on the children and their adult to let them know there are only two rules—DO be creative and play however you want and DON'T throw hard items or throw overhand (throwing items is a great way for children to explore what will happen to an object so I like to encourage softly throwing underhand when appropriate).

I encourage parents to let children be free to play, create, and discover on their own and not interfere unless the child needs a bit of help to get started. I also remind parents it's OK to just observe and not be an active participant.

Another approach to the loose parts programs is to teach parents how to do invitations. This involves limiting the toys available, asking open-ended questions about specific loose parts, and inquiring what children think would happen if you use one specific loose part with another one.

This type of program lends itself well to incorporating a craft. For example, you can put out loose parts that encourage children to explore circles and then have paper plates, coffee filters, circle stickers, and other circular items on the craft table.

Libraries may want to try offering a fairly low-cost, low-interaction loose parts program to encourage children to play and further Nicholson's belief that creativity was not for the gifted few, but that all children are born as creative beings, curious about the world and keen to experiment and discover new things. &

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A [Graphic] Novel Way of Teaching

How to Teach Children How to Write and Draw a Graphic Novel through Zoom

JONATHAN TODD

This sketch is an example of a thumbnail drawing, which I tell children to draw before drawing their finished page on Bristol board.

During the early months of the pandemic, libraries in Massachusetts canceled in-person events, including workshops I had scheduled at their children's departments. Some of the librarians asked if I could teach my course on how to create a graphic novel page virtually, so here is what we did.

Getting Kids Comics-Making Supplies

In this time of COVID-19, caregivers appreciate when programmers make it easy for families to complete projects without needing to find required supplies. So, I packaged everything children needed to complete a graphic novel page in 14-by-18-inch manilla envelopes; total cost was about $157 at Staples. Supplies included:

- 11-by-17-inch piece of 100 lb-smooth surface Bristol Board. I drew a rectangle on the paper that was 10-¼-by-15-½.
- Sharpened pencil
- Index card-size paper with ¼-inch guidelines for lettering
- Glue stick
- Two or three sheets of copy paper
- Thin felt-tip pen
- Twelve-inch ruler
- Small square of kneaded eraser

I mailed or dropped off twenty art kits to the librarians to distribute to the patrons who registered.

Tech Setup

To prepare to teach online, I used a laptop and smartphone (with cameras) that could run Zoom and a smartphone tripod (Joby flexible smartphone stand, $30.) The tripod enabled me to log on from Zoom with my iPhone and point the camera at my drawing board so patrons could see a closeup of what I was drawing. Meanwhile, I spoke to patrons using Zoom and the camera on my laptop.

Jonathan Todd *is a graphic novelist who strives to share emotional experiences of childhood through comics. He pens* 5 A.M.*, an autobiographical comic strip for* CAL *about his life as a cartoonist and family man. Todd also teaches children how to write and draw comics in-person and virtually. His debut graphic novel,* Timid *(Scholastic/Graphix) will be published in Spring 2023. For more information about Todd's work and workshops, visit https://cecilhall.tumblr.com.*

Zoom Application

I'm sure you could use various video-conferencing apps to teach such a workshop, but the librarians and I were most comfortable with Zoom. The hosting libraries marketed and registered the children and sent out the Zoom link a few days before the program. This controlled who could gain access to the workshop. I logged onto Zoom with the librarian about twenty minutes before the workshop to make sure the cameras, the app, and the volumes were working well. *TIP: Make sure you have enough Internet bandwidth to prevent the video images from freezing.*

Introduction

To break the ice, I ask patrons what kind of comics/graphic novels they enjoy and also ask if they have written and drawn comics before.

Creating Characters

I tell children to create their protagonist; it can be anything: a person, girl, boy, animal, alien, an object. But the key is that their main character must want something. I stole this method of leading children in the character-building process from one of my writing teachers, children's book author Kashmira Sheth (*Boys without Names* and *Nina Soni, Former Best Friend*). After I draw an example—a boy who wants a dog—I give the students about ten minutes to create their protagonists.

Plot

In the next stage, I draw an arc and ask students whether they've seen this shape in their language arts classes. I tell them that to have a story, there must be things in the way of their character getting what he or she wants. To illustrate the point, I place three Xs along the slope of the arc. We discuss what could be in the way of the boy getting a dog. They suggest parents, responsibility, or money, and I label the Xs with the suggestions we agree would make a great story. Then, I explain that the story is formed by showing how the protagonist gets around the obstacles and comes to learn something during his journey. I suggest that one idea the protagonist has for getting around the obstacle of money is performing as a street musician. I then tell the children to use one of the pieces of copy paper in the manilla envelope to think of obstacles and show how their character will get around them.

Thumbnailing

In this stage, I ask students if they've seen movie storyboards and can describe them. I share that comics have a similar stage called thumbnails, which make up a miniature version of the whole graphic novel. I show them the binder of the thumbnailed pages of my forthcoming graphic novel *Timid*. Then, I talk them through imagining a scene in their story as a scene in a movie.

In my example of the boy who wants a dog, I demonstrate by drawing quick sketches of the protagonist being told—in six panels—that he couldn't have a dog due to its expense; the scene would end with him getting the idea to borrow his father's guitar to start busking. I then give the students ten minutes to use another piece of copy paper to thumbnail a page in their story, encouraging them to use the number, size, and shape of panels that work for the part of the story they're illustrating.

Panels, Guidelines, and Lettering

I then tell the students to take out the Bristol Board and draw a big version of the panel boxes they used in their thumbnail sketches. If they used a traditional six-panel comic page, the measurements would be 5-inch-square panels leaving a ¼-inch between each panel.

After they have drawn their panels, I give attendees the option of drawing their letters freehand or creating them using guidelines. To create the guidelines, I teach them to hold the lettering guide flush against a panel on the left of the page and lined up to the line of the top panel. I show them how to place dots along the panel border for as many lines of letters they think they'll need based on their thumbnail sketch.

Then, I show them how to slide the lettering guide to the right side of the page, holding the guide flush to the top border and the side border; I tell them to make another set of dots parallel to the dots they made on the left side. Then, I tell them to use the ruler to connect the dots on the left side of the page to those on the right side; the result is ¼-inch guidelines the patrons could use to letter the top of their comic page. To create guidelines in the other panels they should repeat the process. After I teach them to letter their pages, I show them different styles to draw the speech balloons or thought bubbles.

Penciling

I demonstrate that the next step is to draw larger, more detailed versions of the sketches they made in their thumbnailed page. I encourage them to look up images on Google or study objects from life if they need to remember details for their comic page.

Inking

In in-person versions of my workshop, I demonstrate how students can use dip pens, drawing brushes, and India ink. In the virtual version, I show patrons how to simply trace their pencil drawings in felt-tip pens. After the ink is dry, I show

attendees how to erase the guidelines and other pencil lines using the kneaded eraser.

Edits

After the attendees have inked for ten minutes, I show them that one method to edit their works is to cut out a blank piece of paper that is slightly larger than the place of the error on the page. I show them that they can redraw what they need, trace it in ink, and use the glue stick to paste down the corrected image over the image with the error. I then explain that after the artwork is scanned, any lines that show the edge of the patch can be easily edited out.

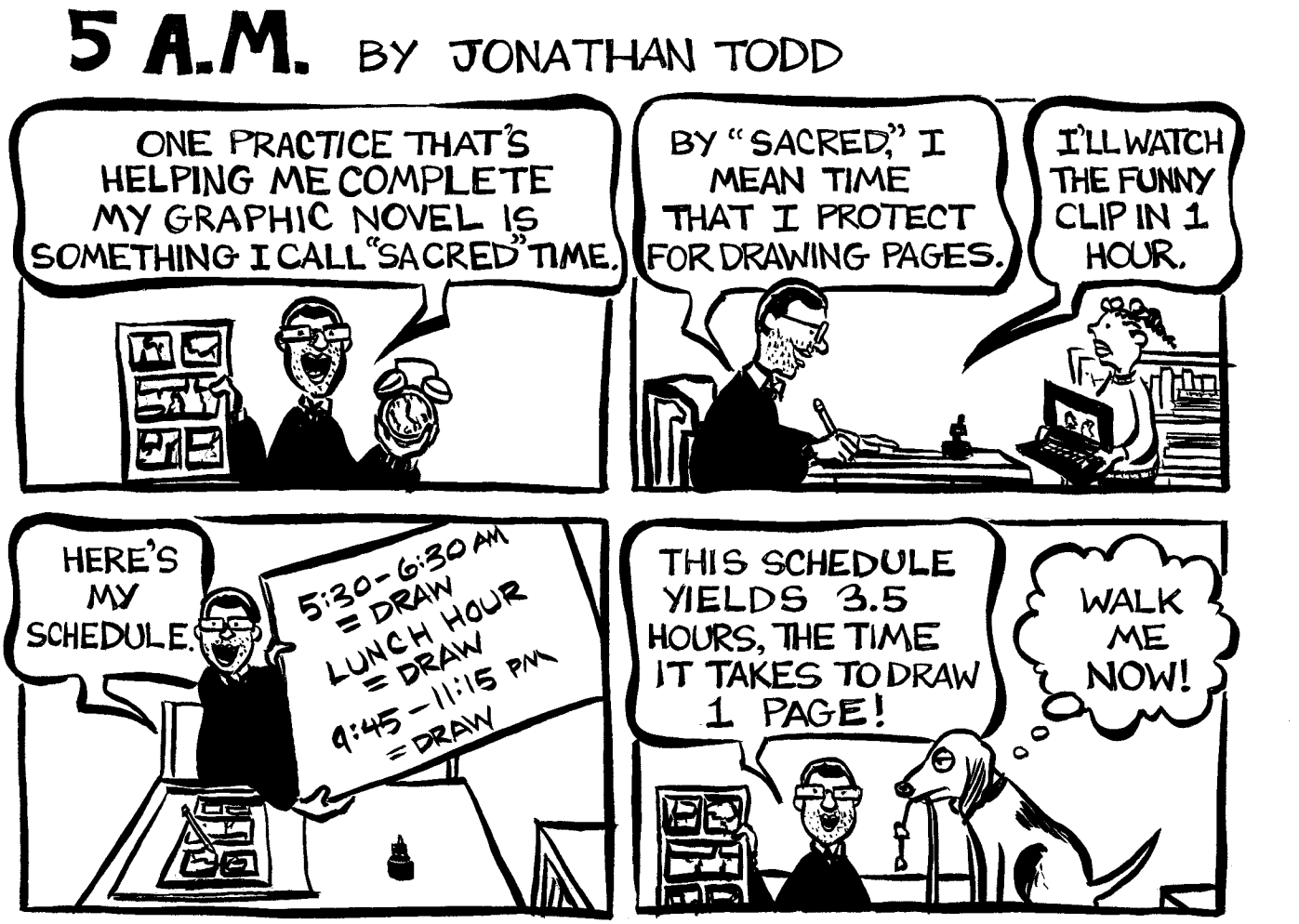
Before I part ways with my students, I invite them to share their work by holding it up to the camera. I also encourage them to keep drawing comics because now they have the tools to create graphic novels in a systematic way.

Marketing and Assessment

The Wayland (MA) Free Library advertised my program through its e-newsletter to patrons. Head of Youth Services Pam McCuen described the workshop as one of the highlights of the summer, adding, "Jonathan created a welcoming, relaxed, and respectful learning environment over Zoom with tweens he was meeting for the first time—no small feat. He was well organized; his examples for story building, panel creation, and character drawing were clear and well suited to the audience…Jonathan went seamlessly back and forth from talking to and fielding questions from the kids through the Zoom screen, to showing them his work through the cell phone camera aimed at his drawing board. He allowed students time to work on their projects by incorporating quiet time into the class. His workshop was well paced, informative, and engaging."

The children's librarian also said the prepared art kits helped with the success of the program. McCuen said, "These kits were an added incentive for tweens to join the workshop, and to attend. Many parents shared with me afterwards how much their tweens enjoyed Jonathan's program."

One parent wrote, "Thank you for offering this programming. [My son] was so proud to show me his completed comic strip and continued to refine it long after the Zoom had ended. The packet you provided with all the materials was very well organized too and got him excited for today." &



When Times Are Worse, Turn to Verse!

Poetry during a Pandemic

SYLVIA VARDELL AND JANET WONG

Dig that shirt! Anthologist Sylvia Vardell models a shirt emblazoned with her book jacket art!

The lockdown last spring shut down everything—our daily routines, our travel plans, in-person conferences, and—for many people—even our usual reading habits. It was difficult to concentrate. We were all hungry for news and guidance, yet we could hardly grasp it. Authors and illustrators began reading their books out loud and sharing those recordings online; publishers widened their permission rules to allow this sharing of content and images

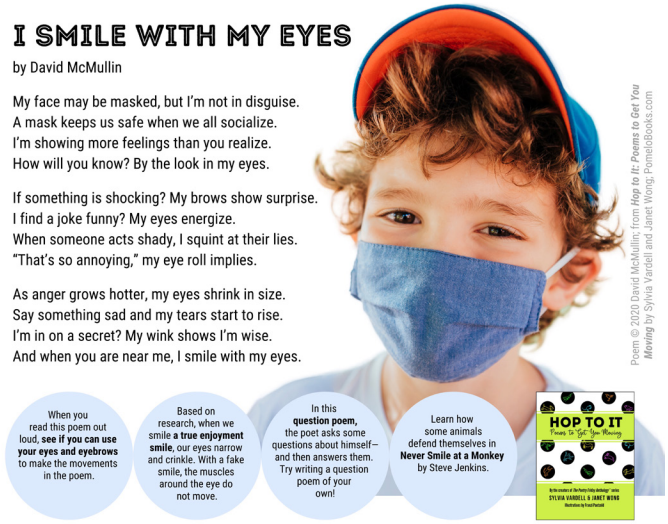
One of our first responses to the pandemic was to add short videos to the Vimeo channel for Pomelo Books to make it fun and easy to share a poem with a simple click. The brevity of poetry allows for our short attention spans; the beautiful language and wisdom is comforting and even therapeutic.

We are two people who spend a lot of time spreading the word about the power and pleasure of poetry for young people. We've created several "teaching anthologies" that combine new poems alongside teaching and learning connections and resources. During this period of quarantine and unrest, we continued in this work, devoting our energies to several poetry projects—a solo project for Sylvia, virtual presentations with children and educators for Janet, and a collaborative project together.

Sylvia's assignment was gathering poetry (and permissions) for *A World Full of Poems*, an anthology of poems for children ages 5-12 by more than eighty wonderful poets from the US, as well as more than thirty poets from Canada, England, Ireland, Wales, Australia, and the Netherlands. Back matter features a poem treasure hunt, tips for acting out poems, activities for writing poetry, and suggestions for family sharing at home.

Our joint project was *Hop to It: Poems to Get You Moving*, which gathered one hundred poems by ninety poets. It started with a focus on a single theme—movement—from

Sylvia Vardell *is a professor in the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University and teaches graduate courses in children's and young adult literature. Her current work focuses on poetry for children, including a regular blog, PoetryforChildren.Blogspot.com. Vardell has served as a member or chair of several national award committees, including the NCTE Award for Poetry, the ALA Legacy Award, and the Odyssey, Sibert, and Caldecott award committees, among others. Children's author* ***Janet Wong*** *is a graduate of Yale Law School and a former lawyer. She is the author of more than thirty books for children and teens on a wide variety of subjects, including identity (*A Suitcase of Seaweed & More*), writing and revision (*You Have to Write*), community and inclusion (*Apple Pie 4th of July*), peer pressure (*Me and Rolly Maloo*), chess (*Alex and the Wednesday Chess Club*), and yoga (*Twist: Yoga Poems*).*



David McMullins' poem is one timely poem included in the collection.

sports to dance to stretching. But then we found ourselves mired in the pandemic and decided to expand the theme of the book. We chose to include poems about COVID-19, staycations, keeping connected with friends, learning via Zoom, and mask-wearing, with poems like "I Smile with My Eyes" by new poet David McMullin.

History took another turn, as we stood up to proclaim Black Lives Matter, and once again poetry helped us grow in understanding and self-expression. There is a rich, long history of poetry by Black poets, and new works are published every year offering a glimpse of painful struggle, as well as celebrating identity, family, and everyday joy like *Woke: A Young Poet's Call to Justice* by Mahogany L. Browne and *Say Her Name* by Zetta Elliott, for example—and we knew that we wanted to include poems about exercising your voice, standing up for what you believe in, marching together, and even voting. The result, we think, is a book that sums up 2020 and helps us move forward.

We kept the thread of movement throughout the book by providing suggestions for sharing and performing each poem—climbing like cats, dancing at your desk, standing or stretching, breathing mindfully, and even incorporating American Sign Language (ASL). We also packed the book with fun facts, including many with science or social studies connections, as well as language arts skill suggestions and recommended relevant picture books for every poem.

All of us—especially children doing remote learning—can use "brain breaks" from our computers, and a one-minute poem can provide just that. Since the publication of *Hop to It*, we've been busy spreading the word about the balm that poetry offers through informative blog posts and timely tweets, as well as silly poetry-themed clothing, hopping poet collages, and fun Zoom poetry parties with poets reading their poems aloud while we all waved, hopped, and laughed together.

Sylvia keeps a "sneak peek" list of all the year's poetry for young people on her blog, PoetryforChildren.Blogspot.com, starting in January and updated throughout the year. During 2020, we were able to choose from collections such as *A Hatful of Dragons: And More Than 13.8 Billion Other Funny Poems* by Vikram Madan, *This Poem Is a Nest* by Irene Latham, and *Everything Comes Next: Collected & New Poems* by Naomi Shihab Nye, as well as novels in verse like Elizabeth Acevedo's *Clap When You Land* or Margarita Engle's *With a Star in My Hand*. This comprehensive list can be supplemented with Lisa Krok's overview and 2020 poetry handbook for YA, *Novels in Verse for Teens: A Guidebook with Activities for Teachers and Librarians*.

The best news about pandemic poetry may be that it has helped us all rediscover the value of sharing poems during "normal" times, too. Perhaps we had forgotten how fun a poem could be or needed to unlearn how "stuffy" or "serious" we once thought poetry was. We hope people continue to seek out poems and poetry books that give us the energizing brain breaks and social-emotional affirmation that young readers—and readers of all ages—need and deserve. &

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Paley's Practice

Storytelling, Story Acting, and Early Learning

Lisa M. Sensale Yazdian and Betsy Diamant-Cohen

***Lisa M. Sensale Yazdian**, PhD, is an educational psychologist who has been working in public libraries since 2007. She currently oversees youth outreach services at Boone County Public Library in northern Kentucky. **Betsy Diamant-Cohen** is a children's librarian with a doctorate, an early literacy trainer, consultant, and author. In addition to translating research into practical information for children's librarians and co-authoring this column, she is now busy designing curricula, offering online courses, and presenting webinars to children's librarians near and far.*

In the early years, children's librarians traditionally lit a candle at the beginning of each storytime. The altered atmosphere helped transport children mentally to a land of stories. The candle was blown out at the end of the session, bringing them back to the library. Although this tradition has not endured (due perhaps to the invention of smoke alarms), storytelling remains an effective tool that can be used by librarians.

Storytelling is powerful, not only for the listener but for the teller as well. "When a child tells a story, he not only means something, feels something, refers to an event; most important, he DOES something."[1] They may be sharing part of their life and identity, attempting to make someone laugh, or trying to make sense of an experience. Storytelling invokes creativity and imagination and helps children work through social, emotional, and cognitive challenges. Coupled with story acting and writing, it supports multiple early childhood domains and skills.

Here we share information about the storytelling practice pioneered by the late preschool teacher/researcher Vivian Paley.

Storytelling and Story Acting

Paley is credited for creating a formal program that uses both dictation and dramatization systematically in storytelling (ST) and story acting (SA),[2] where children individually dictate stories that are written down by an adult. They then gather around a designated "stage" to act out their tales.

First-hand accounts of this practice can be found in some of Paley's books, *Wally's Stories: Conversations in Kindergarten*,[3] *The Girl with the Brown Crayon: How Children Use Stories to Shape their Lives*,[4] and *The Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter*.[5] Although these practices are not commonly used today, they are valuable tools children's librarians should consider using, and they provide new ways for emphasizing the early literacy building tools of Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR).

Storytelling (Dictation)

Dictation can take place one-on-one or in front of a group. Stories are limited to one page and as children share, the adult provides gentle scaffolding by offering prompts or asking clarifying questions.[6] See how an adult helps a child articulate her story in the Boston Listens program https://www.bpsearlylearning.org/storytelling/dictation.

Story Acting (Dramatization)

During the dramatization phase, the story's author and the remainder of the children are called to assemble around the stage. The story's author chooses the part they would like to play and the remaining actors can be

chosen from a class list or from the order in which they are seated. Children may not act a second time until everyone has had a turn and children can decline to participate. The adult reads the story as the children play their parts and may offer some direction. See how dramatization is facilitated in Boston Listens https://www.bpsearlylearning.org/storytelling/dramatization.

Readers can find more information on ST/SA and its impact in *The Classrooms All Young Children Need: Lessons in Teaching from Vivian Paley*,[7] *Storytelling in Early Childhood: Enriching Language, Literacy and Classroom Culture*,[8] and the article, "Vivian Paley's Storytelling. Story Acting Comes to the Boston Public Schools."[9]

Benefits of ST/SA

Language and Literacy Skills

- **Vocabulary.** It is widely accepted that reading aloud to children supports vocabulary development.[10] It has also been shown that children who have their oral language written down or participate in storytelling/story acting (ST/SA) experience vocabulary gains and it allows participants to experience new vocabulary in authentic ways.[11]

- **Narrative Structure.** Narrative skills are a significant predictor of reading ability and ST/SA can promote these skills.[12] Children learn how stories work, what they are composed of, sequencing, character and plot development, and about the writing process.[13] The research suggests "ST/SA provides a bridge between the contextualized speech of young children and the decontextualized language of books and writing."[14]

- **Print and Phonological Awareness.** ST/SA supports children's awareness of written language.[15] As children share their stories, they watch as the adult scribes, moving left-to-right and top-to-bottom, leaving spaces between words, and adding necessary punctuation. They learn print has a purpose. Also, as children's stories are written, they have opportunities to learn about letter-sound connections and spelling.

Social and Emotional Development

- **Community Building.** An ST/SA framework creates diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces for learning. All children are invited to express themselves and all levels of participation are welcome (e.g., single words, gestures), which contributes to their overall sense of worth.[16] The children and teacher together shape the rules and stories that impact individuals and the larger learning community.[17]

- **Self-esteem.** ST/SA operates from a strengths-based perspective. All input is valued and as children become more comfortable with ST/SA they are more willing to participate.[18]

- **Self-regulation.** The ability to self-regulate or inhibit an automatic response until a situation has been processed, is critical to school and life success.[19] In ST/SA children practice sitting quietly, taking turns, and following rules so all community members can effectively participate.

Creativity

Adele Diamond notes, "The essence of creativity is to be able to disassemble and recombine elements in new ways."[20] As groups of children generate and dramatize their stories, it is not uncommon for them to recycle or remix themes and elements that may have appeared in other texts and performances to create something new.[21] It has also been shown that children who participate in ST/SA author their own imaginative texts with distinct themes.[22]

The Process in Practice

What could ST/SA look like in practice at a library or childcare center?

The library could offer a weekly program with registration.

- Establish ground rules (e.g., turn-taking, acceptable stories and actions, voluntary participation).
- Draw name cards of children who will have the opportunity to share their stories that day.
- Dictate stories in the front of the group.
- Invite children and adults to act out the stories.
- Make stories visible to others (e.g., create books with children's text and illustrations, share videos, invite the community to a performance).

Librarians could partner with teachers to train together so the program continues when the librarian is not present.

- Share a story (your own or something traditional) for the kids to act out, then facilitate ST/SA with the group, having a set number of children participate.
- Offer the program as a family engagement workshop or series after school or during the weekend.

Motivation

Children, in general, enjoy engaging in pretend play and like telling stories. When they are given the opportunity to act out their own stories with friends and perform in front of an audience, they may be motived to compose more.[23] Likewise, many are keen on producing stories that will be popular with their peers.[24] &

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Incorporating Intellectual Freedom into STEM Programs

Julia A. Nephew

Julia A. Nephew *is a Children Services Librarian at Addison (IL) Public Library and a member of the ALSC Intellectual Freedom Committee.*

How can librarians connect children with trustworthy scientific source material about climate change? Here we look at ways to include intellectual freedom concepts in STEM/STEAM programming for children.

The national STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) initiative has enjoyed broad support in schools and libraries for years. Yet, what science tells us about how humans are negatively impacting the world has become highly contentious and is even censored.

Global warming/climate change is the most far-reaching example. The media, pushed by political forces, give equal credence and air time to a small number of scientists who deny the predictions based on scientific studies.

Consider the tips and program ideas below, focusing on providing children with accurate, age-appropriate information on climate change.

1. **Use age-appropriate choices.** Choose books that speak to children in clear and understandable language appropriate for their age and ability level. The books and information you give should not dwell on the dangers.

2. **Focus on optimism.** Emphasize solutions early on in the process of giving information. Suggest daily positive changes people can do to set an example for their family and friends. For example, to conserve water, people can turn off the running water while they brush their teeth.

3. **Discuss nature and actions.** Discuss the benefits of nature, even something as simple as a visit to a playground and how it makes them feel to be in a natural setting. Read books at storytime that show the beauty of nature and talk about the animals. Discuss how humans can protect the disappearing habitats of these animals.

4. **Enlist experts.** Invite an environmental scientist to give a presentation or partner with a local non-profit with a mission to educate people about recycling. Here is an example of one in the Chicago area: https://www.scarce.org/

5. **Research.** Research reliably factual websites that present the science about contentious issues.

Sample Programs

Sample Program 1

Theme: Kids for the Climate! What Children Can Do About Climate Change / Global Warming

Rationale: Greta Thunberg, the Swedish teenager who started a worldwide movement to draw attention to climate change, has inspired millions of

children and adults. When children hear her story, they want to know what they can do personally to help slow climate change.

Introduce the Topic: Start with a short introduction about climate change and the issues around it. The recent devastating fires in Australia and California underscore the threat from drought that comes with changing weather patterns. Describe renewable energy and compare it to energy from fossil fuels. Explore the threat to children's health from climate change with information from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Read: *Our House Is on Fire! Greta Thunberg's Call to Save the Planet* by Jeanette Winter; *What Is Climate Change?* by Gail Herman; *Why Are the Ice Caps Melting? The Dangers of Global Warming* by Anne Rockwell

Alternate Titles: *Listen* by Holly M. McGhee; *The Global Warming Express* by Marina Weber (the author wrote this story as a child and became an activist at age 6); *If Polar Bears Disappeared* by Lily Williams

Extension Activities: Research American child activists for stopping climate change, such as Alexandria Villaseñor, Benji Backer, Varshini Prakash, Isra Hirsi. What led them to become activists?

Sample Program 2

Theme: Recycling

Rationale: Children can change their daily habits in simple ways that can help the environment and the people, animals, and plants in it.

Introduce the Topic: Bring in a box of clean items that were used in a home and discarded. Explain what recycling is and ask them to separate the items into "recyclable" or "garbage."

Read: *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein; *Green Living*: *No Action Too Small* by Lucia Raatma; *What a Waste: Trash, Recycling, and Protecting Our Planet* by Jess French

Alternate Title: *All That Trash: The Story of the 1987 Garbage Barge and Our Problem with Stuff* by Meghan McCarthy

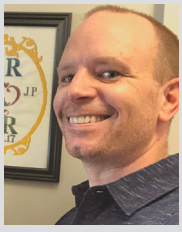
Extension Activities: Children collect or list the plastic, aluminum, and paper their household uses in one day.

- What can be recycled? (Contact your local curbside pickup recycler's website.)
- Where does the recycling go?
- What happens to the things put in the regular garbage?
- Teach the "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Refuse" motto and discuss how children can personally limit their use of plastic. &

Lighting the Way

Providing Timely Resources for Underserved Populations

Jaime Eastman and J. Joseph Prince



Jaime Eastman *is a Senior Public Services Librarian for the Plano (TX) Public Library and serves as the Family Place Libraries coordinator for the Harrington branch.* ***J. Joseph Prince*** *is the Curriculum and Outreach Educator for the Jerome Library at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. They are both co-chairs of ALSC's Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers Committee.*

Libraries provide access to valuable information, resources, and services. Yet, despite our best efforts, some populations remain overlooked or underserved.

For libraries, these patrons struggle with access to, use of, or representation in our collections, programs, and services. These barriers may result from language, financial status, race, gender, sexual orientation, or specific skills and abilities. As community and cultural institutions, we must not provide any patron with less than adequate—or better yet, exemplary—service.

The Library Service to Underserved Children and Their Caregivers committee (LSUCTC) hopes to help identify and bridge these gaps, serving as advocates to connect leadership and frontline staff with information and resources to support, serve, and better represent the entirety of our communities. We hope to inspire collective investment in these users and their unique needs.

Creating inclusive libraries must remain a priority; navigating a global pandemic means our conversations must include both virtual and in-person applications. At its core, inclusivity ensures all users have access to our services, provides representation and respect for all populations, and offers variety and authenticity in our collections, resources, and programming. We must engage in uncomfortable conversations, make intentional choices, and learn and grow together. While individual library needs vary greatly, our overall goals for identifying and reaching underserved populations intersect.

1. **Know your unique community.** Take some time to survey, talk to leaders and advocacy groups, ask questions, and learn. Engage experts who can help provide guidance and champion valuable partnerships.

2. **Ask for help.** Admitting you're not an expert or authority leads to growth. Learn from those with the knowledge and experience to reach and support your unique communities. Ask where your efforts will be most helpful and appreciated.

3. **Be intentional.** Identifying and serving historically marginalized populations requires concentrated efforts to make changes and challenge assumptions. Give your work the time and effort it deserves.

4. **Research and learn.** Not every effort will be a success. Learn from each what you can do differently or better. Ask questions, but more importantly, be willing to listen to the answers. Have the humility to admit if you've made a mistake.

To provide resources for and about underserved populations, LSUCTC has spent the past few months gradually rolling out a toolkit.[1] Every other month, we highlight a traditionally underserved population, providing context and background to the population and providing germane resources. In every installment, librarians will find

- **Recommended read alouds:** a minimum of five picture books related to the topic that could be read aloud during programming.

- **Professional resources:** a list of resources from within the last ten years providing deeper context and understanding of the featured population.

- **Community resources:** a list of relevant local, state, and/or national resources librarians can turn to for bolstering their programming and resources.

Select installments may also include the following resource categories:

- **Recommended apps:** links to an app or list of apps relevant to the featured population.

- **Materials for the children's room:** purchases (with links to the products) that would enhance the children's room in a public or school library.

- **Programming materials:** a curated list of materials helpful in providing programming for this population.

- **Publishers and vendors:** Organizations and companies offering materials specific to this population.

- **Successful library programs:** successful endeavors from across the country.

How does the committee determine which underserved populations will be featured in the toolkit? Collectively, LSUCTC has identified communities of which we are a part or in which we have a vested interest. Similarly, we solicited feedback in both a 2019 survey and in a call issued through an ALSC blog post in September 2020.[2] We hope to tackle many of those populations in the coming months.

The process for building each toolkit page is detail-driven. Each committee member is part of a pairing that spends two months researching, gathering resources, soliciting recommendations, and drawing on personal/professional experiences to inform the materials that eventually populate the toolkit page. These pages are periodically revisited and updated or refreshed with more current information and best practices. In this way, we hope that toolkit remains timely and vibrant, offering visitors relevant resources.

After each toolkit page has been published, we devote the following month to highlighting resources from the page and/or providing additional information about the topic on the ALSC blog. Our long-term goal is to heavily feature and promote an exemplary library program for each targeted population. We feel very strongly about elevating the wonderful work done by children's librarians across the country.

As of the date this column was submitted, two toolkit pages have been introduced: Autism & Sensory Processing Disorders[3] and Financial Insecurity & Homelessness.[4] Later in 2020, we rolled out a toolkit page that focuses on serving Spanish-speaking populations, and in February 2021, we released a page, which we collaborated on with the Children and Technology committee, devoted to technology accessibility. You can find all of our toolkit pages online at any time and featured on the ALSC blog as they release.

Our work improves through collaboration and communication. You can support our efforts by sharing your own suggestions for future toolkit topics, encouraging conversations, and sharing your own resources and endeavors. &

Reach the LSUCTC at lsuctc@gmail.com.

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Best Practices Online

Considerations for Successful Virtual Programs

Angela Nolet, Jacqueline Lockwood, and Shanyn Gamble

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By now, your organization has likely decided which video platform it's going to use. Here are some Zoom best practices being used at King County (WA) Library System.

Planning Your Program

Protect yourself while also representing your organization. Be mindful that in an online program you might be recorded without your knowledge on someone's phone, camera, or another meeting platform. Take care with your appearance, background, and personal details.

1. **Determine program length.** Consider screen fatigue and the length of your program, any program lasting longer than sixty to ninety minutes will need a break. Consider using virtual energizers. Dancingwithmarkers.com has a blog post with their favorites. Search for "Purposeful Play: 5 Favorite Virtual Energizers."

2. **Set goals/outcomes.** What are your goals/outcomes? How will you measure them?

3. **Establish logistics.**

    a. How will you begin and end the program? Plan speaking order?

    b. Do you want to debrief with your partners or end the meeting for all?

    c. Do you anticipate phone-in patrons? Share the phone number with other staff, especially phone/chat staff, so they have the call-in number of the event.

    d. Do you have any handouts or materials that a patron may ask for later?

    e. Do you anticipate patrons who are blind or low vision? Run your presentation through the PowerPoint accessibility checker. Email any slides or content in advance to the patron(s) so it may be used with their screen reading software. Here's a link that might be helpful to access for instructions: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25.

    f. Do you anticipate patrons who are deaf or hard of hearing? Is there support for contracting an ASL interpreter or a live captions service over Zoom? Both Microsoft Teams and Zoom offer decent AI live captioning options that individual users can turn on for themselves.

    g. Are the text and images on your slides easy to understand, clear, and in high contrast? Try using the accessibility checker in PowerPoint to scan for trouble spots.

4. **Look Your Best.** As part of our communication with presenters, we send them tips for engaging video calls. These should sound familiar, but it's helpful to have them all in one document. During the technical check, we'll make suggestions to improve their set up.

5. **Engage the audience.** Seek out resources and expertise on student engagement. During Zoomtopia 2020, Bryan L. Miller of Wonder Workshop suggested "kinesthetic and tactile learning is critical for early elementary age. Prompt kids to do something physical in response to a key word or concept. For example, teach them the sign for "collaboration" and ask them to make the sign each time they hear the word."

6. **Address issues.** How will you address inappropriate or offensive behavior in the audience? We will move problem patrons into a breakout room to talk to them. If they continue to misbehave, they are removed from the meeting.

7. **Solicit feedback.** Do you have a survey link to share or another way to request feedback to evaluate your program?

8. **Have a Plan B.** Have a backup communication plan in the event of a power outage or other disruption. We have a host and co-host so that the program continues. Having more staff on the program will also let your presenter focus on presenting, while the other person watches chat and the gallery view for questions or disruptions.

Sharing Audio

- Does your program have a segment for quiet activity? Try adding background music.
    - Share your computer audio at a low volume. This can help bridge some of the discomfort of staring at other people on your screen.
    - If music is a large part of your program, or if it's recorded, don't forget to check copyright restrictions.
    - When someone wants to share without the background music, you need to stop sharing.

Spotlight Feature

During our storytime programs, we may feature up to five librarians. We use the spotlight feature on the presenter. Even with audience unmuted, it keeps the presenter up front.

- Use Spotlight to make the book front and center.
- Let the presenter introduce who's up next. If you have technical help with your events, this is a cue to spotlight them.
- Ask for volunteers to share anything created during the program. You can spotlight the child while they share. If this is part of a series, kids will learn to not talk over one another since they'll get a turn.
- Spotlighting kids adds to their experience. You'll get more participation from younger kids once they realize they get the spotlight treatment.

Recording Requests

Some presenters want to record their portions for personal use. We have a set of housekeeping slides where we alert patrons about protecting their privacy. Then we spotlight the presenter while recording to capture only them.

Communicate Through Chat

Does your program have an activity that kids are following along with?

- Use chat to share tools/ingredients, and the step by step instruction for what's happening. Adults are usually there helping their kids.
- Add your email address in chat for questions.
- Let participants know they can use chat for help with technical issues. &

ALSC Member Profiles

Allison Knight and Melody Leung

Allison Knight *is Branch Manager, MidPointe Library System in Ohio;* ***Melody Leung*** *is Children's Librarian, Whatcom County (WA) Library System.*

Alia Jones, formerly Sr. Library Services Assistant at Cincinnati and Hamilton County (OH) Public Library, 2020 Caldecott Committee

Why did you join ALSC? I joined in 2017 because I was curious about youth services in libraries on a national level and children's book awards. I first became interested in book awards as a children's bookseller at two indie bookstores in Cincinnati.

What's your best ALSC memory? At ALA Annual 2018 in New Orleans, I attended the board meeting where the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award was changed to the Children's Literature Legacy Award. It was a privilege to listen to the findings of the task force and witness the vote. It was a very emotional and important moment for children's literature, libraries, and Native children. Knowing all the hard work and care that went into the decision and then getting to be a part of that historic moment made me proud to be a member.

What makes you want to be a children's librarian? Before bookstores and libraries, I was an English teacher in South Korea for four years through the Fulbright Program. Being a part of my local community and getting to know my students in and out of the classroom was very rewarding. Working with children is a challenging gift; there's always so much to learn.

Denise Dávila, PhD, Assistant Professor of Children's Literature and Literacy Education, Language and Literacy Studies, University of Texas

Why did you join ALSC? Being a member is essential to my work and my identity as a children's literature professor, advocate, and enthusiast.

What's your best ALSC memory? Serving on the 2020 Theodor (Seuss) Geisel Award committee. Not only did I learn so much from fellow committee members, I also cultivated new professional relationships and friendships.

What makes you want to be a professor in children's literature? As a child, I never saw characters like myself in children's books. Nevertheless, I took great comfort in reading and re-reading hand-me-down sets of Little Golden Books and Dr. Seuss early readers that my sisters and I shared at home. In elementary school, my favorite part of the day was listening to my teacher read. I loved being swept into very different worlds from my own.

As the first person in my family to attend university, I took multiple children's literature courses and became an elementary school teacher…it wasn't until my early years of teaching that I fully recognized the paucity in books by and for BIPOC communities as I searched for titles reflecting the life experiences of my own students.

Now, as a teacher educator, my primary objective is to support preservice and practicing teachers in not only curating and critically evaluating books by and for BIPOC communities, but also cultivating their own love of reading.

Ann Crewdson, Children's Specialist, King County (WA) Library System

Why did you join ALSC? I joined decades ago, and I've always had great people supporting me. It was a chance to actively be part of the membership, and I had no idea what that was until I was locked in my first award committee. I encourage any new member to take whatever comes to you. If there's a vacancy, research the position first and then step into the role. Do the hard work of the committees you are assigned and the committee of your choice will be yours someday.

What's your best ALSC memory? I am so grateful for all the opportunities for growth. I've been given challenging and rewarding work on committees. So many life lessons. Though I may have changed, ALSC remains world class in its advocacy and its work. I hope to give back. I will never forget the ALSC presidents who allowed my spirit to soar—Gretchen Wronka, KT Horning, Pat Scales, and Nina Lindsay. I owe them my eternal gratitude.

What makes you want to be a children's librarian? Gratification comes from the plum I pluck everyday—the sweetest is in educating infants, children, their parents, grandparents, and caregivers. Also, being a twenty-first-century children's librarian means I can finally start a storytime collection with picturebooks written by BIPOC. &

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McChesney Named Recipient of Distinguished Service Award

Elizabeth (Liz) McChesney is the 2021 recipient of ALSC's Distinguished Service Award, which honors an individual who has made significant contributions to library service to children and to ALSC.

McChesney is the Outreach and Partnership Consultant for Laundry Literacy Coalition and the previous director of Children's Services and Family Engagement at Chicago Public Libraries. She serves as Senior Advisor to the Urban Libraries Council and as the Library Advisor to the National Summer Learning Association.

She has worked with ALSC and the National Summer Learning Association to promote libraries during National Summer Learning Day. McChesney was a member of the first ALSC Task Force on implementing Summer and Out of School Time Learning and, since 2018, leads ALSC's Task Force on Summer/Out of School Time Learning. In this role she is currently leading ALSC's playbook development for summer learning, which will be disseminated nationally in early 2021.

McChesney, according to nominator Laura Jenkins, "is a leader, an inspiration, and a mentor to hundreds of children's librarians and others within the sphere where libraries and children intersect. But the truly outstanding quality that makes Liz stand out from other inspiring leaders is that, while she may be in front, she is never alone. Liz has mastered working cooperatively with others—individuals and institutions—so that not only children but also partners reap the benefit of her creativity and dedication."

Known for pioneering inclusive methodologies, McChesney spearheaded multiple practices and programs for children and families throughout Chicago Public Library that included materials in alternative formats, training for staff, early childhood programming for visually impaired, hearing impaired, and autistic children, and STEM programming for school-age children on the Autism Spectrum. McChesney led the work of a city-wide app for children and families on the spectrum as they visited libraries, the first to be added by a public library in the nation.

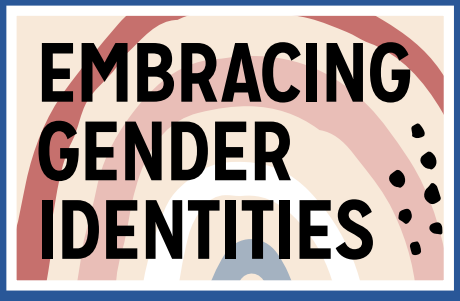
Additionally, McChesney has contributed monumentally to the work of transforming summer reading programs to incorporate twenty-first-century learning skills. Driven by her motto, "All learning counts," she was able to greatly increase summer reading participation, including to underserved populations, through incorporating art, making, and STEM learning.

McChesney has authored two books through ALA Editions, *Summer Matters: Making All Learning Count* (2017) and *Pairing STEAM with Stories* (2020). She has been recognized through the National Summer Learning Association's Excellence Award (the first time a library has won this award), the *Library Journal* Movers & Shakers Award, and the John Cotton Dana Award for Marketing Excellence.

As noted by ALSC Past-President Andrew Medlar, "I'm proud to have been Elizabeth's colleague for over two decades and to have witnessed first-hand how her vision, skill, wisdom, determination, and leadership have bettered the careers of hundreds of librarians and the lives of millions of children. She never stops dreaming, planning, and working to ensure all children have access to learning at their neighborhood library, and she is truly an industry trailblazer in creativity and collaboration. And throughout all of the incredible accomplishments and immense impact of her career so far, Elizabeth has never lost the heart of a children's librarian or her deep passion for bringing kids and books together. It is a joy to see her nurture learning, drive outcomes for all children—but especially those in need—and nurture and support the field of librarians." &

ALSC Booklists

alsc
ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN



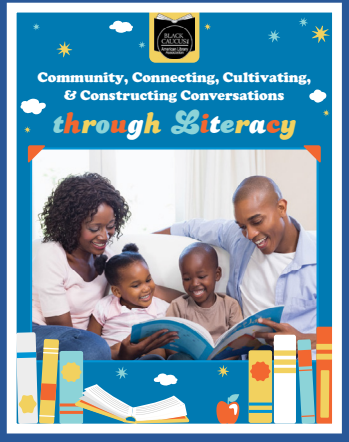
Embracing Gender Identities was created to help support conversations about gender identity and expression. This list, which is divided into books for 0-5 year-olds, elementary school students and middle schoolers, includes recommended informational picture books, as well as works of fiction and non-fiction that challenge gender norms and explore the wide spectrum of gender identity.
It includes additional resources for parents.

Download: bit.ly/alscembracinglist

In **#LookToLibraries,** ALSC has compiled a suite of tools and resources to support library professionals and the families in their communities.

These resources include booklists for children that cover a variety of topics from understanding germs to managing anxiety.

Download: bit.ly/LookToLibraries



Community, Connecting, Cultivating & Constructing Conversations Through Literacy

This list was developed by members of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) and ALSC's Quicklists Committee.

It is intended to support conversations about dismantling systems of racial injustice.

Download: bit.ly/bcalaandalsclist2020

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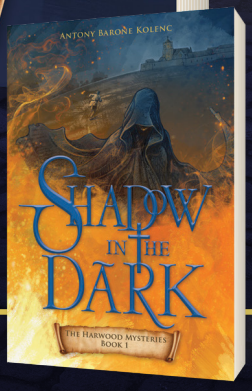

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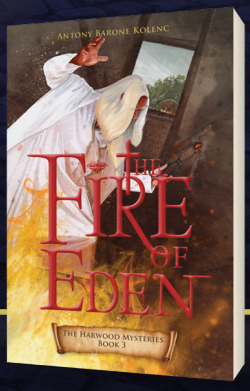

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